

Cricket
THE GREAT ONES

Cricket

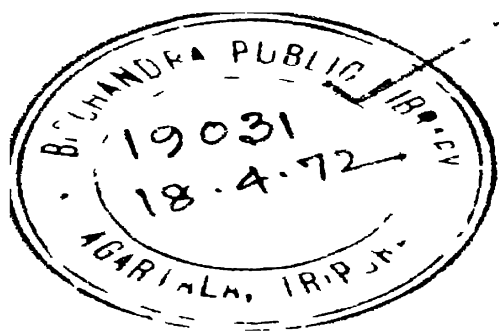
THE GREAT ONES

*Studies of the Eight
Finest Batsmen
of Cricket History*

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GENERAL EDITOR

John Arlott



PELHAM BOOKS

PREFACE

It is a tempting, but unprofitable, argument to name the greatest batsmen in the history of cricket. There are those who would insist that no list is complete which omits Ranji, or Frank Woolley, or Garfield Sobers, or Charlie Macartney or the Three W's of the West Indies – all of whom would have been included here if the book had been double the length.

Strong as the argument for their inclusion may be, however, it would be a bold man who dared say which of the chosen eight – whose careers span the last hundred years – should have been omitted.

The writers, in each case, have a special affinity with the cricketers they write about and in most cases, personal acquaintanceship with them. In each instance we may feel that the subject has been understood, but understood, from essay to essay, with different stresses – between character, technique, personality, historic significance and nostalgia. Together, however, the results present a wide range of cricket, of attitudes to the game and of varying strata of interest and relish.

For purposes of reference, and for the pleasure of the statistically minded, the figures of each player's career are given in the appendix.

The reader will, I believe, sense the writers' delight in their various subjects: it is our hope that he will also share it.

JOHN ARLOTT

NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

A. A. Thomson: born, Harrogate, Yorkshire, 1894: novelist, humorist, President of the Cricket Society (since 1963); author of a number of books of cricket history and biography; a writer with a feeling for the illuminating anecdote and well-known as an after-dinner speaker.

Neville Cardus: born Manchester, Lancashire, 1889: the creator of modern cricket writing: for many years, as 'Cricketer', cricket correspondent, as well as music critic, of *The Manchester Guardian*: author of many books of felicitous essays on cricket and music, and two volumes of autobiography.

John Arlott: born Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1914: a writer and broadcaster on cricket since 1946.

J. M. Kilburn: born Sheffield, Yorkshire, 1909: cricket correspondent of *The Yorkshire Post* since 1934: Chairman of the Cricket Writers Club 1950: author of several books of cricket history and criticism: his use of prose has always been outstandingly sensitive.

Bill Bowes: born Elland, Yorkshire, 1908: fast bowler for M.C.C., Yorkshire and England 1928 to 1947: cricket correspondent of *The Yorkshire Evening Post*: author of an autobiography, *Express Deliveries* and an account of the 1961 Test series: a shrewd and technically informed critic of the game.

C. L. R. James: born Chaguanas, Trinidad, 1901: for several years a cricket correspondent for *The Manchester Guardian*; lecturer and writer on history, politics and literature: author of *Beyond a Boundary*, one of the finest cricket books.

Colin Cowdrey: born Bangalore, India, 1932: batsman, slip field, occasional leg-break bowler and captain of Oxford University, Kent and England, 1952 to date; author of several books of cricket reminiscence and instruction.

Michael Melford: born London, 1916: senior cricket correspon-

dent of *The Sunday Telegraph* also reports cricket for *The Daily Telegraph*; an experienced, informed and sympathetic writer on the game.

Michael Fordham: born Faversham, Kent 1926: statistician of *The Playfair Cricket Monthly* and *The Playfair Cricket Annual*; editor of *Cricket Records*: scorer for B.B.C.

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ONE

W. G. Grace

by A. A. Thomson

TIME PASSES and many legends pass with it. The legend of W. G. Grace does not pass and the reason is that the man was greater than the legend. It was born and grew in the Victorian age, when publicity as a trade was in its infancy; when fame depended on outstanding deeds, and reputation on what was truly known and respected. Today half a dozen television appearances will make a 'personality'; but fame so easily won can be easily lost, as some new, temporarily famous personality jostles his predecessor off front page or screen. When Grace, having at the age of forty-eight scored 243 not out against Sussex, did rather better in the return game, *The Times* reported the matter under the heading: 'Another good innings by Dr Grace,'; and you would have had to scan the even smaller print carefully to discover that he had scored 301.

It is useful in literary criticism to compare poets and dramatists with their fellows, but it verges on the absurd to compare even the best of them with Shakespeare, who has placed himself outside ordinary comparison. In the smaller world of cricket there is nobody to compare with W. G. His picture remains clearly in the minds of old men who saw him only once, and in the minds of generations who never saw him at all. He was not only a great Victorian; he was almost *the* great Victorian for, apart from Mr Gladstone and the Queen herself, nobody was better known or more easily recognised.

The mental picture we carry is sharply etched: a big, burly man with a bushy black beard and enormous hands, in which a bat looks almost as small as a teaspoon. On his head perches, also incongruously small, a red and yellow M.C.C. cap and his expression blends a sense of fun with an unquenchable zest for the game, the whole game and, for the moment at least, nothing but the game.

The recital of his records might mean more in an age easily impressed by statistics than it could have meant to W. G. himself. Think of a man who in his career scored 54,896 runs, took 2,876 wickets, held 871 catches, made 126 first-class centuries, and hit 1,000 runs in season, including six 2,000s, twenty-eight times. Most of these figures have been individually bettered, but not by many and not by much. Hobbs, as you might expect, and one or two others, have made more runs; Rhodes, and a few more, have

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a bigger tally of wickets; and Woolley, with 913, had held more catches but, taking all these figures into the reckoning, no one player has come near him. Mr Neville Weston, the greatest living authority on the subject, has calculated that, on top of these first-class figures, W. G. scored about 25,000 more runs, including nearly a hundred centuries and took about 4,000 wickets in games of lesser importance.

Awe-inspiring as the statistics may be, they tell only a fraction of the story. For forty-one years, from his first first-class game till he retired after scoring 74 at the Oval on his fifty-eighth birthday, he dominated the summer scene. From first to last he was the biggest fish in the sea, though his most distinguished contemporaries were anything but minnows. All his time he was king and, though he was a merry monarch rather than an absolute one, his reign was never challenged.

There was cricket before Grace. There was Fuller Pilch; there was Alfred Mynn; and before them there had been the noble Hambledon men. Yet his effect upon the development of cricket in his lifetime made a difference like that between a 'puffing billy' and the latest diesel express. Neville Cardus has said of him: 'Through bat and ball, through a game born in a rustic field, W. G. expressed himself to the full circumference of him, and at the same time he enlarged the scope of cricket, until it became, year after year, the embodiment of the English scene in summer, of English humour, artfulness, pugnacity and good fellowship.'

If these qualities still remain characteristic, we owe them to W. G. Cricket's humour is largely *his* humour; such pugnacity as we now need to win against Australia or West Indies would, if and when we achieved it, be *his* pugnacity; our artfulness is but a pale shadow of *his* artfulness. As for the game's good fellowship, it still lives in the memory of a genial bearded giant. His full name was Dr William Gilbert Grace, but he was known far and wide as W. G.; to his fellow-players he was the Champion, because his gifts were far beyond theirs; and long before age dared touch him, he was the Old Man, the old man of the tribe, the cheerfully cunning one, the one who, like Bob Pretty in W. W. Jacob's stories, 'couldn't be beat'. Above all, he was for countless English folk, the emblem of the sportsman and the countryman, of green turf and friendly sunshine; emblem, indeed, of the English summer itself.

W. G. was born at Downend, near Bristol, on 18th June, 1848, the son of a doctor and fourth of five brothers, all of whom became good cricketers, three of them, E. M., W. G. and G. F., famous ones. All of them were doctors, except Fred (G. F.) who sadly died before his thirtieth birthday and just before completing his medical studies. W. G. was fortunate in his parents: his father, a hard-working, sport-loving doctor, his mother, a woman of fine character, keenly knowledgeable about cricket. Such was the paternal Grace's enthusiasm for the game that he cut down apple trees in the orchard of his house, the Chestnuts, and he and Henry, the eldest son, laid out a pitch. By the time W. G. was old enough to hold a bat, daily practice had become part of his summer life. All the family fielded, not only mother and sisters, but the dogs, Don, Ponto and Noble, too.

The chief coach was Mrs Grace's brother, Uncle Pocock, himself a remarkable character, a lithographer by profession and a cricketer by inclination. It was he who, shocked by E. M.'s dashing tendency to pull everything round to leg, taught W. G. the cardinal virtue of the straight bat. The first real cricket match that W. G. saw, sitting with his mother in her pony-carriage, was between William Clarke's All England XI and a local Twenty-Two, captained by Dr Grace.

The next year, when All England came again, E. M., a sturdy lad of fourteen, was playing, and his nimbleness at long-stop so impressed Clarke that he gave him a bat and presented his mother with a book of 'cricket hints'. In reply Mrs Grace wrote, thanking Mr Clarke for his kindness to E. M., but telling him that she had another son who was also talented. At fourteen W. G. suffered a serious attack of pneumonia and when he recovered he began to grow taller than his brothers, who remained stocky all their lives. Before he was fifteen he played for a Bristol Twenty-Two against another All England Eleven and, standing up against 'Tear 'em' Tarrant and the Jackson whose 'pace was very fearful', he scored 32 with complete composure.

In 1864, aged sixteen, he successfully played his first game in London for a side raised by his brother Henry against Surrey: and, in the second match of the tour, played at Brighton, he made his first big score, 170. The following year saw his first real season in first-class cricket and the beginning of his personal ascendancy in the Gentlemen v. Players fixture at Lord's, the Oval or the old

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Princes ground. In the thirty-five years before this, the Gentlemen had won only seven games; in the next fifty matches they won thirty-one and lost only seven. In batting the sides had been about equal but the professionals had been vastly stronger in bowling. From the advent of W. G., even though the second game in which he played was lost, the general balance was tilted in favour of the Gentlemen right up to the time he stopped playing. His batting was the amateurs' greatest strength and his bowling was by no means negligible.

His biggest achievement in 1866 was an innings played for an England Eleven against Surrey at the Oval. Going in at No. 5, he hit every ball hard on what he called its 'demerits' and finished up with 224 not out, the highest score ever made on the ground until then. On the second day his captain gave him leave to slip away to the Crystal Palace and take part in a quarter-mile hurdle race, which he won comfortably. His second massive hundred of the season was also made at the Oval, for the Gentlemen of the South against the Players of the South. The Players' bowling was strong, but he punished it mercilessly and his 173 not out, scored out of 240, was to serve as a typical W. G. innings in which he made considerably more than half the total score. Here he was then, just past his eighteenth birthday, standing eagerly on the threshold of his tremendous career.

From then on success was unbroken and though, like all his family, he worked fairly hard in the winter months for his medical degree and he attended athletic meetings in spring, his heart and his summers belonged to cricket. His exploits in the 1870s show a touch of the fantastic and the incredible. In that year died Charles Dickens, who loved cricket and might well have considered W. G., with his zest and exuberance, a true Dickens character. In the same year was passed the first great Education Act, and throughout the decade W. G. continued his policy of educating England's bowlers and fieldsmen.

In 1870 W. G. hit five centuries, two of them, including a 215, in Gentleman v. Players matches, and in 1871 at the age of twenty-three, he launched out on one of his most prolific seasons. Some historians have called this his *annus mirabilis*, and this was true, so long as we remember that 1873, 1876 and, most marvellous of all, 1895, were all wonderful years, too. The years of 1871 to 1876 saw the full flowering of W. G.'s batting genius. Three times he

passed 2,000 runs; in 1871 he was near to 3,000. Nobody had scored 2,000 runs in a season before, nor had anybody achieved the double. In the seventies W. G. did it seven times. In the same decade the newly reconstituted Gloucestershire club under W. G.'s captaincy won the County Championship three times and shared it once.

His 2,739 runs in 1871 gave him an average of 78 – the next best was Richard Daft's 34 – and nobody scored a higher seasonal total in the next quarter of century. Of his ten centuries, two were double ones and four were very close to that figure. In a North v. South benefit match at the Oval he was given out leg-before to James Shaw, who was frankly scared at the *lèse-majesté* of his handiwork. W. G.'s second visit to the crease was not so much an innings as a punitive expedition. By the time he was out at 426 he had hit 268 and his liveliest partner had made 36.

In one of the Gentlemen v. Players games, played at Brighton, W. G. and the bowlers underwent the same searing experience. A duck in the first innings brought a promise from John Lillywhite, whose benefit it was, to hand W. G. two sovereigns if he would undertake to pay sixpence for every second innings run scored. At the end of the day Lillywhite politely asked for five pounds on account and, when W. G. paid up, offered to cry quits. 'Right' said W. G. 'And,' he used to recount chuckling, 'that was lucky for me. I was in such fettle I'd have bankrupted myself.'

So the centuries poured out: 181 for M.C.C. against Surrey; 178 for South v. North; 162 for the Gentlemen v. Cambridge, and 189 not out for Single v. Married of England. If the title suggest a comic match, remember that the Married contained some of the best bowlers in England, including Southerton and the Shaws, Alfred and James. W. G.'s last century of the season was made for Gloucestershire against Nottinghamshire in a game which his side lost heavily.

After he had scored 79 (out of 147) in the first innings, his friend Richard Daft said: 'You should have made a century. Nobody ever has here.'

'Why didn't you tell me?' laughed W. G. 'I'll do it in the second innings.' And he did.

It was in this season that an enthusiast bought a pair of pads once worn by the great Alfred Mynn and presented them to W. G.

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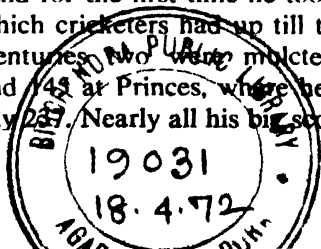
Alfred Mynn had been known as England's Champion Cricketer. There was a new Champion now.

For anybody but W. G., 1872 would have been a splendid year; for him it was a modest season between two outstanding ones. His hundreds were only six in number, two of them for the Gentlemen against the finest professional bowling; one for an England Eleven again a combined north country side, one for South v. North and two against Yorkshire. In the game against the combined team he went in first and carried his bat right through to 170 out of 290, forcing his most successful partner, who made 35, to mutter ruefully: 'It's not much fun batting with Mr Grace; you spend all your time running his runs.'

Early on he had scored 101 in helping M.C.C. to defeat Yorkshire at Lord's, but Tom Emmett was unimpressed by this. 'Wait till he comes to Sheffield. We'll show him.' In an innings bedevilled by rain W. G. scored 142 in an opening partnership of 238. It was his final flagellating score of 150 that brought from Tom the heart-cry: 'He ought to have a littler bat!' The fact that W. G. on his first visit to Bramall Lane also took fifteen Yorkshire wickets at seven runs apiece was just by the way.

With 1873 we touch the second of the 'great' years; he had already spent some weeks of the previous autumn on a tour in Canada and the United States, where the visitors had played gay matches against odds, winning most of them. The results were hardly important: what has come down to us is the series of after-dinner speeches which W. G. launched on the world. Replying at Montreal to the toast of the Champion Batsman of Cricketdom, he said: 'Gentlemen, I beg to thank you for the honour you have done me. I never saw better bowling than I have seen today, and I hope to see as good wherever I go.' This, received with wild applause, was probably the longest speech W. G. ever made and so delighted was he with its success that he adopted the formula at later banquets to celebrate 'better batting', 'better wickets', 'prettier ladies', and – with great eloquence – 'better oysters'.

But on to 1873. Runs flowed ceaselessly. For the second time he scored over 2,000 runs and for the first time he took a hundred wickets, a double feat of which cricketers had up till then scarcely dreamed. Of his seven centuries, two were omitted from the Players; 158 at the Oval and 143 at Princes, where he was first in and last out in a total of only 287. Nearly all his big scores supplied



more than half his side's total and in his biggest, for South against North, he carried his bat right through an innings of 311 for 192 not out. Only three of his partners made double figures and only one scored 40. He was, and was acknowledged to be, a giant among cricketers and a complete master of the game. In the autumn of that year he married a distant cousin, Miss Agnes Nicholls Day and, as far as is possible within the bounds of human imperfection, they lived happily ever after.

The marriage had at least a testing start for, a fortnight later, Mrs Grace accompanied her bridegroom on his first tour of Australia, where his team played fifteen matches, winning ten and enduring fifteen civic welcomes (with brass bands), fifteen mayoral banquets, and fifteen pitches of doubtful quality. Wherever he went he was vastly popular and so firmly did he dominate the scene that of one game it was written: 'Mr Grace won by seven wickets'. One small incident at Melbourne cast a shadow over English cricket which nobody noted at the time. As W. G., watched by enthusiastic spectators, was batting at the nets to anyone who would send him down a ball, a young man, after a preliminary sally or two, bowled him neck and crop.

'Who did that?' demanded W. G. in his high-pitched voice, but the bowler had disappeared among the crowd. The sinister shadow belonged to the tall, menacing figure of F. R. Spofforth.

The next two seasons were quiet ones, though W. G. scored a further eight centuries and was highly successful with the ball. He may have been tired after his Australian tour, but this did not prevent him, as the weeks went by, from breaking the hearts of the bowlers of Sussex, and in turn the Players of the South, the North and of England, not to mention Yorkshire, punished twice. These personal triumphs against Yorkshire were a special joy to W. G., if only because he loved the Yorkshire professionals as much as they wryly and ruefully loved him. He was a prodigious (and willing) draw at a benefit and in Luke Greenwood's benefit game at Bramall Lane, W. G. scored 167 out of 304 from the bat. ('A satisfactory innings', he said, 'on such an occasion.') In the return game at Clifton, Gloucestershire won again by an innings and it was one of the season's curiosities that, out of their total of 316, they owed 259 to the Graces (W. G., 127, E. M., 51, and G. F., 81). The next highest score was Mr Extras with 13. It would

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have been a cosmic injustice if the county of the 'resistless Graces' had not carried off the season's championship.

W. G.'s hundreds in the wet, unfriendly summer of 1875 were few, but of vintage quality. In what was plainly a bowler's year the bowlers who suffered from his genial savagery were those of the Players and Yorkshire. Against the Players at Lord's he scored 152 and only fell to a run out, while at Bramall Lane, in a benefit which put £300 into old John Thewlis's pocket, he hit 111 out of 174 before being brilliantly stumped by Pinder. This season of bad weather was his finest bowling year. Many of his 191 wickets were owed to three eager fieldsmen: E. M. creeping in at point, Fred roving 'the country' and, eagerest of all, W. G. himself, who would gallop to mid-off to take catches off his own bowling.

Until W. G. retired he was always doing astonishing things, but the sheer glory of 1876 never returned to him. This summer was *his* summer and the sun shone on him at the height of his unrivalled powers. Not only was this a tremendous season in which he scored 2,622 runs and took 129 wickets; it contained those eight days in August, which shattered all previous records. He began the season with 104 out of 171 against Sussex and went on to score 169 in the Lord's Gentlemen v. Players match, a game famous because it was Arthur Shrewsbury's first. There was a 114 not out for South against North and then, for United South, a side sponsored by his brother Fred, against United North, he performed the fantastic feat of scoring 126 out of 169. Pooley, the wicket-keeper made 14 and the next highest score came from five extras.

But these were only the preliminaries. On 10th August he began a game for M.C.C. against Kent at Canterbury. Kent batted all the first day and when M.C.C. went in they batted feebly enough to have to follow-on. In the second innings W. G. went in after tea and, anxious as he always was to get back to Downend for the week-end, hit out vigorously, ending the day with 133 not out. On the Saturday he held all the bowlers in such subjection that by the time he was out, he had hit 51 fours and scored 344 out of 546. This was the first glimpse of the Wonderful Eight Days and, although he travelled from Canterbury back to Bristol in hot, comfortless trains, he was eager to start on Monday against Nottinghamshire. While he was at the wicket his share of 262 was 177. The Graces made three-quarters of their side's runs and were responsible for seventeen of their opponents twenty wickets.

The third game was played against Yorkshire at Cheltenham and the story goes that on the railway platform the arriving Yorkshiremen met the departing Notts men and listened to their tales of W. G.'s superhuman prowess.

'Nay,' said Tom Emmett, 'afore we let him do that to us, we'd shoot him.'

But nothing could thwart him. He won the toss, batted all day and, after a wet second morning went on batting till the Yorkshire attack was so battered and browbeaten that their captain had to *beg* the bowlers to continue. In the end W. G. was left with 318 not out and the Yorkshiremen were 'worn to shreds'. This was the highest individual score in county cricket till A. C. MacLaren surpassed it twenty years later. In eight days W. G. had scored 839 for twice out, giving himself an average of 419.5. He always insisted on the point-five.

A week or two previously, in a game which does not enter the first-class records, he had played for Fred's United South against a Twenty-Two of Grimsby. At the end of the second day W. G. had made 314, every one of which had to be run out on an outfield of longish grass and against twenty-two fielders. Earlier that day a telegram had been brought to him at the wicket, announcing the birth of his second son, and he at once called for champagne all round. When he was at last out at 681 he called out to the score-box: 'How many did I get?'

'Three ninety-nine,' said the scorer.

'Oh, make it four hundred,' laughed W. G. 'One more for the baby.' And that is how the record stands to this day.

No human being could have glorified 1877 as W. G. glorified 1876. Yet, even if his average fell from 62 to just under 40, he batted as well as most batsmen and, with 179 wickets in the bag, he bowled better than most bowlers. Gloucestershire headed the county table once more and as they had owed their high position in 1876 to W. G.'s batting, they now owed it to his bowling. In one game against Nottinghamshire he took seventeen wickets with his seemingly innocent donkey-drops, the last seven without having a run hit off him. The apparent guilelessness of his guile was a solemn thing. He made only two centuries, but both were good ones: 261 at Prince's for South against North, and 110 for a combined Yorkshire and Gloucestershire eleven against the Rest of England at Lord's. This second century, which included a six

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clean out of Lord's, was made on his twenty-ninth birthday.

W. G., a married man with two small children and a real need to complete his medical degree, might in 1878 have given up cricket altogether if it had not been for the first visit of an Australian touring team. Captained by David Gregory, these tough, talented performers proceeded to knock the stuffing out of English cricket. At Lord's they shot out a good M.C.C. side for 33 and this disaster was brought about by the terrific bowling of Spofforth, the saturnine young man who had bowled W. G. in the Melbourne nets. It was impossible for W. G. to consider retiring when enemies of this calibre were attacking his country. He must stay, if only to keep an eye on Spofforth. Test cricket in England did not begin until two seasons later; in the meantime W. G. was ready for it.

In 1879 W. G. finished his long campaign to conquer the medical schools, whom he had been apt to suspect of having the same guile as slow bowlers. After qualifying or, as he told Tom Emmett, 'getting his diploma', he started his cricket late in an abominably wet summer, making only three hundreds, all on difficult wickets, and twice scoring more than half his side's total.

In 1880 the first Test match to be played in England took place in September. The tourist of 1878 had arranged no Tests and there had been some disagreements between the Australian crowds and Lord Harris's touring side of 1878-79. The visitors of 1880 were gifted, friendly and popular and, although the summer had run into September, it was found possible to arrange a Test at the Oval.

This Test of 1880 was remarkable in several ways. It was the only one in which the three Graces played together, for unhappily Fred died a month later. W. G. scored 152, E. M. proved a valuable opening partner and Fred, though he bagged a pair, took a historic catch to dismiss Bonnor from the highest hit ever made at the Oval or, probably, anywhere else. There were splendid batsmen in the England eleven: Lord Harris, A. P. Lucas and the Lancashire all-rounder, A. G. Steel, but no batting was anywhere near in quality to W. G.'s. In this exciting game began the long friendship between W. G. and W. L. (Billy Murdoch, the tourists' captain, who, when Australia followed-on 271 behind, carried his bat through the innings for 153, forcing England to bat again, and shakily at that. Murdoch had bet W. G. a sovereign

that he would beat W. G.'s splendid score and he wore the sovereign on his watchchain till the end of his days.

For W. G. the early 1880s were quiet years, in which he worked industriously at his Bristol medical practice. In 1881, playing in fewer games, he made only one century, but this was a fighting one which formed the backbone of the Gentleman's exciting win over the Players at the Oval. The following year saw England's defeat in the dramatic Ashes match in which, as the villain, Spofforth bowled his way into Test history. It still remains one of the great classic games and W. G.'s part in it was not discreditable. In England's fourth innings effort to make a mere 85 runs, victory was never in doubt, so long as W. G. was there. Hornby and Barlow were out early, but W. G. and Ulyett carried the score past the half-century and all seemed easy until Murdoch changed Spofforth over from the Vauxhall to the pavilion end, where, bowling with its dark bulk behind him, he had Ulyett snapped at the wicket, while W. G. was caught from a mishit off the other bowler. From that moment disaster followed disaster, like the misfortunes of Job, and the Test was lost by seven runs. W. G.'s comment was wryly humorous and not unjust: 'I left six men to get 32 runs and they couldn't get 'em.'

In 1883 he had his head down in his profession and he made only one century, a hard-hitting one against Lancashire, who failed to dislodge him with the cunning of Barlow or the thunderbolts of Crossland. He even missed the Gentlemen v. Players match at the Oval, an almost unheard of omission. The next summer saw another Australian visit and The Ashes were won back, if only by one victory out of three Tests. In these Tests W. G. did little, but in three other games he took a personal vengeance on the tourists for The Ashes defeat of two years before, scoring 101 for M.C., 107 for the Gentlemen and, in an innings that gave him grim satisfaction, 116 not out for Gloucestershire. As he also made a good not out score in the second innings he reckoned the tourists were sick of the sight of him. That year his mother died and he felt the loss keenly, because the Graces had always been an unfussily devoted family and this loss underlined the sad death of Fred four years before. From the earliest practices on the orchard pitch to the days when her sons telegraphed their scores to her at close of play, the bond had never loosened. The Grace menfolk were wilful, noisy and keen on having their own way, but they

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meekly took her advice on a mass of problems. A steadily burning light had gone out of his life.

As the 1880s progressed, there were critics who suggested, though not in his presence, that W. G. was not quite the man he had been, but he did the double again with a kind of genial arrogance in 1885 and 1886. In the latter season he went on hitting hundreds against the Australians: one for the Gentlemen, one for Gloucestershire, and one, his highest Test score for England at the Oval, where he actually made 170 out of the 216 scored while he was at the crease. Here was absolute mastery.

In Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee Year of 1887 W. G. enjoyed a golden season, too. The sun shone, the runs flowed, the centuries appeared almost automatically on the score-boards. The scores in themselves, apart from the cavalier way in which they were levied, gave proof that his reign was not ending. There were no visitors to plunder, so he took his hundreds where he found them: from Middlesex, Cambridge, Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Kent. In the Yorkshire game he came close to a hundred in each innings with 92 and 183 not out and against Kent he did in fact perform the feat, as he said; 'by the skin of his teeth' with 101 and 103 not out. In the Notts match, which Gloucestershire lost by an innings, he carried his bat right through for 113 out of 186. For the fourth time he scored over 2,000 runs; his batting average was 54, and he missed what would have been his ninth double by only three wickets. Some said that this season marked the golden autumn of his career. It might have done, but it did not. The best was yet to be.

In 1888 he did little against the Australians in Tests, though his 24 out of 63 on a horrid Lord's wicket was the highest personal score in the only Test that England lost. He took 163 off the Australians for the Gentlemen, and compiled a huge double hundred against Sussex. What, however, he called his champion match was the high-scoring game against Yorkshire in which he made 148 and 153, the first of these comprising nearly two-thirds of his side's total. Here was another season when he missed the double by only a handful of wickets. Though he seldom complained of luck, it is a fact that there were at least four seasons when, with the tiniest increase of fortune, he might have increased his number of doubles from eight to twelve, bringing him third to Rhodes and Hirst in the list of all-rounders.

For W. G. the next two years were modest ones and in 1891 an injured knee handicapped him badly. This did not prevent him from undertaking his second Australian tour. He was eighteen years older than when he had paid his first visit and his enormously increased fame made him a kind of raree show wherever he went. He was, in fact, the greatest drawing card England had ever taken to Australia. Though England, by sheer lack of application more than anything else, lost two of the three Tests, and W. G. himself made only a couple of fifties in the rubber, the tour was a vastly popular success. W. G.'s only hundred of the visit was his 159 not out carried through the innings against Victoria, but all over the continent, wondering enthusiasts chuckled over his bushy beard and his vast bulk. They adored his larger-than-life-size qualities and agreed with old Tom Emmett's dictum: 'He's a nonsuch'.

The three seasons that followed the tour were neither his best nor his worst. In 1892 his strained knee was still giving trouble and this cramped his eagerness for the quick single; he thus scored no century, though Sussex were mulcted for 99. He did not, in fact, score another hundred till June 1893, the first he had made in England since May 1890; but this, scored for M.C.C. against Kent, was worth waiting for. He made 128 out of 189 and held excellent bowlers, like Wright, Martin and G. G. Hearne, wholly in thrall. In 1894, the year when Herbert Sutcliffe was born, W. G. added three more to his list of centuries, bringing the total to ninety-eight. Two of them were scored off strong Cambridge sides and the third was made at Hastings in a belated Gentlemen v. Players game, where his share of 247 was 131. He had, he complained, to leave some capital partridge shooting to do it.

The year 1895 contained W. G.'s forty-seventh birthday. It also saw the rise in the firmament of a new star, K. S. Ranjitsinhji, who for Sussex against M.C.C. in early May scored 227 for once out, while W. G., playing against him, had to be content with 103. This, however, was his ninety-ninth hundred and cricketing England waited, with fingers crossed, for the next one. Two modest scores against Yorkshire intervened and then came, on 16th, 17th and 18th May, the match between Gloucestershire and Somerset at Bristol which caused more countrywide excitement than the general election which was also taking place. Somerset started with some elegant batting by L. C. H. Palaret and Fowler, then fell

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away, and at the end of the first day Gloucestershire had lost two wickets, with W. G. 38 not out.

The next morning, bitterly cold though it was, saw a dazzling partnership between W. G. and the Clifton schoolboy, C. L. Townsend, whom W. G. called 'Challie'. As the news spread in whispers through the town that W. G. was steadily hitting his way towards his century of centuries, the crowds began to pack in. The wind grew colder, snow-flakes flecked W. G.'s dark beard and when the scorers signalled that only two more runs were needed, he appeared to grow flustered. The normally unflappable S. M. J. (Sammy) Woods could hardly hold the ball, what with the cold and the fear of getting his man out by accident. Though usually the most aggressive of fast bowlers, Sam sent down a slow donkey-drop well on the leg side and, to his intense relief, saw W. G. belt it away for four.

The crowd roared its satisfaction, the fieldsmen clapped, W. G. raised his cap towards both sides of the ground. 'Now we'll have the old devil out,' said Sammy Woods and proceeded to bowl at his own hostile, breakneck pace. But W. G. went on to 150, to 200, which was a signal for champagne being brought out, and then he went on again to 250. When he was ninth out, caught at slip, he had amassed 288. The most astonishing feature of this gigantic innings was the statement by the Somerset wicket-keeper that throughout the whole of that mortal innings only four balls were allowed to pass the bat.

Even then W. G. was a long way from the unheard of feat of scoring a thousand runs in May. He took a pleasant fifty from Cambridge and, against Kent at the old Bat and Ball ground, he played once more as if nobody could get him out. After fielding all the first day, he batted all the next and was last out for 257. Because Kent batted feebly in their second innings, Gloucestershire had a chance of winning, which they took with both hands. Out of the 106 for one which brought them victory in an hour and a quarter W. G. made 73 not out. Thus he scored 330 for once out and, batting and fielding, had been on the field for every ball bowled.

Gloucestershire's next match was against Middlesex at Lord's; and on the 30th of the month W. G. still needed 153 for his thousand. It goes without saying that he won the toss and coolly set about collecting the runs without either undue haste or delay.

He was careful before lunch, but afterwards quickened his pace. Until he was 99 the opposition tried their level best to get him out; it was only then that a friendly long-hop gave him his hundred and then they were at him again. He still needed 53 more and 49 of them had to be fought for with the utmost intensity. Then a second 'dolly' was gratefully driven to the on-boundary. The decorous crowd at Lord's threw decorum to the winds in acclaiming the Champion and when he returned to the pavilion, having added another 16 runs, the whole ground melted into a roar of applause. 'The sound of cheering in front of the pavilion,' said Bernard Darwin, in a memorable phrase, 'has scarcely died away yet.'

Nor had W. G.'s passion for runs died, either. In that fantastic season he had still five centuries to come, one of them for the Gentlemen against the I Zingari in a match that marked the Club's jubilee. Though there were men like F. S. Jackson, A. G. Steel, A. E. Stoddart and Capt. F. G. Wynyard against him, W. G. batted with consummate ease and when his side needed 172 to win, he and Arthur Sellers, father of Brian, hit off the runs in remarkably quick time.

Surely after such a season the golden autumn of this unique career was coming to an end? It was not. Runs flowed again, over 2,000 of them. Of his four big innings, two almost reached the realm of fantasy. In two games for Gloucestershire against Sussex he hit 544 for once out. Nor did these necessarily cover the best of his cricket. The Australians were here and he had to have a go at them. For Lord Sheffield's Eleven he batted with superb aplomb against the hair-raising fast bowling of Ernest Jones, who propelled the historic ball through W. G.'s beard. The dialogue that followed has become legendary.

'What's this, Jonah, what's this?'

'Sorry, Doctor, she slipped.'

And the Doctor went on to make a flawless 49.

Right through the Australian's tour W. G. would keep cropping up with scores that, though not large, showed the best batting on view. For a South team he hit a fifty which was the finest of the match and even when the visitors shot Gloucestershire out for 17, he made nine of them.

He had been called the Champion, then the Doctor, and now the Old Man. For the Queen 1897 was a year of Golden Jubilee

and W. G. was approaching a jubilee of his own. In 1898 he would be fifty himself. But in each of these years he scored over 1,500 runs and took more than 50 wickets. There were four hundreds in 1897 and three in 1898. There should have been four, but when well set for a fourth he suddenly declared. 'I've just remembered,' he confessed, 'that 93 was the only score between nought and hundred I'd never got.'

In the year 1899 W. G. played his last game for England and, what was more of a tragedy for him, his last game for Gloucestershire. He appeared in the first Test at Trent Bridge, batted handsomely in the first innings, but was bowled for one by a ferocious breakback in the second. After the game he said to F. S. Jackson: 'It's no use, Jacker. I shan't play again.' It was fielding which, he felt, had defeated him. 'It's the ground, Charlie,' he said to C. B. Fry. 'It's too far away.'

His quarrel with Gloucestershire was a more tragic affair about which it is now hard to sift the true facts. Certainly W. G. was self-willed and arbitrary in his attitude and was unlikely to dissolve into sweetness and light when feeling right in an argument. The dispute was about W. G.'s right, as captain, to pick his teams, match by match. This right he claimed automatically and autocratically and it would have been strange if some members of the county committee had not disagreed with him.

W. G. flared up at what he felt to be interference and flung in his resignation not only from the committee but from the captaincy, too. This caused a panic plea that he should withdraw his resignation, but when he did so, a demand followed that teams should be picked by a selection committee and this drove him to fury. Finally, after he had gone off to play in four away matches, he received an ultimatum demanding that he should state exactly what matches he intended playing in during the year. The committee had heard that he had been asked to manage a new cricket club at the Crystal Palace and rightly or not, W. G. felt that he was being asked, at pistol point, to choose between Gloucestershire and this other club. He exploded with a roar and his letter of resignation has a classic ring. The final paragraph reads: 'I have the greatest affection for the county of my birth, but for the Committee as a body, the greatest contempt.'

That was the sad end of W. G.'s connection with Gloucestershire for, though both sides might have admitted that they were

at fault, neither did until it was too late. The club at Crystal Palace, called London County, lived a shortish life but a gay one. He and his old friend, Billy Murdoch, rollicked together through the seasons and W. G., as the game's recognised father-figure, could call on virtually any eminent cricketer to play for him; he could, indeed, have produced a magnificent Test team from among his guest artists. Despite the excellent cricket that was often played, the experiment failed to bring in enough money to support itself, for a reason more understandable today: namely, that people will not faithfully 'follow' a non-competitive team, however attractive, because the spur of real conflict is missing.

It was fun while it lasted and at least there was virtue in playing two friendly games against Gloucestershire. At the end of the 1904 season London County folded up and in the nature of things W. G.'s first-class career was almost over. He made a good score or two in 1906 for a team he had raised himself and, in the Gentlemen v. Players match he 'made a good end'. Scoring 74 in handsome style, he played, as *Wisden* said, 'well enough to give the younger people an idea of what his batting was like in his prime'. As he returned to the pavilion amid a torrent of cheering, he threw down his bat happily and cried: 'There, I shan't play any more.'

There were only a couple of odd first-class appearances in the following two years, but he played club cricket almost to the end of his life. He died in October 1915, saddened by the war, which was carrying off the splendid young men of the age. In his unsentimental way he felt for them deeply, deeply... He had retired to Mottingham, where he laid a lawn in his big garden, tending it with green fingers. Working there he had a stroke, from which he never recovered. He was buried under a hawthorn tree at Elmer's End cemetery near the Crystal Palace and, though England was locked in a life and death struggle, the nation could pause a moment as the Champion was laid to rest. So much of the best of the old world was going and he had gone with it.

The legend of W. G. grew enormously, but then he was enormous. Physically and temperamentally, he was a Falstaff, far beyond life size in body and spirit and, though he did not 'babble of green fields', he raised the simple game, played on green fields, to a superb combination of an art and a science, neither of which words he would have bothered to understand. He was essentially a simple man, basing his conduct on the field or off on first

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principles. Subtleties were not for him, though his cricket was as full of a kind of country artfulness as a man's might be.

Many of the stories that are told of him may be doubtful in fact, but are true in spirit, especially when they underline his colossal zest for the game and the enormous size of what would now be called his 'public image'. I do not know if clubs really advertised their game as: 'Admission, sixpence: if Dr Grace is playing, one shilling.' If they did, the difference was absurdly understated.

Many of the stories purport to describe his flair for 'gamesmanship'. These tales, though they have a basis, are often exaggerated.

Many of them come from the schoolboy larking that went on whenever the Grace family were at play together. If any particular ploy went a little too far, you could usually trace it to E. M., a much more ruthless character than W. G.

I disbelieve the stories of how he used to intimate umpires. No doubt he could frown or look indignantly astonished, if given out leg-before, but there was nothing wicked in this humorous artfulness. The umpires of his day were old cricketers, many of them old friends, who well knew his 'tricks and manners'. They would give him as good as he got and time and again his half humorous attempts to get away with murder were firmly squashed. They knew the Old Man; he knew them and most of it was innocent fun.

If he said, with a solemn face, that he was not disputing with the umpires, but merely educating them, there was a vast amount of truth in the joke. The old country umpires, as opposed to the first-class ones, were often biased and oftener completely ignorant and, if W. G. was educating them, they could not help bettering themselves from the instruction, even if he was naughty sometimes. If he argued, as he apocryphally did, that 'the crowd came to see him bat not to see the umpire make a fool of himself', this was a fact, even if I don't believe the story. The most outrageous tale concerns C. J. Kortright of Essex, reckoned in his day the fastest bowler and the most incorrigible joker, except E. M. and W. G., who ever played. After several vain appeals against the Old Man for leg-before, he knocked his middle stump out of the ground with a terrifying yorker. As W. G. slowly walked away, Kortright murmured incredulously: 'You're not going, Doctor? There's one stump still standing.' W. G. affected to be insulted, but he laughed

about it afterwards and I remain unconvinced that he and Kortright did not invent the story between them.

My favourite tale, which neither you nor I have to believe, is about a young captain who took his duties seriously and wished most of all to beat the county of the 'resistless Graces'. On the first morning of the Gloucestershire match he ordered his men down to the nets, where they practised with the utmost zeal. Absorbed in this vital practice, the young skipper failed to observe the passage of time. A bell rang from the pavilion and the captain, without asking for whom the bell tolled hurried his men in, to be met at the pavilion steps by W. G. and E. M., padded, gloved and eager to break bowlers' hearts. Which is exactly what they did. On a billiard table wicket the two of them proceeded to demolish the attack and when, with the score about 150 for none, the young captain led his jaded band into lunch, a disturbing thought occurred to him. They had never tossed up.

It is the same with the stories about his doctoring: not many are true, though some of them might have been. All the Graces liked cricket more than doctoring, but this does not mean that they were not competent and conscientious professional men. If stories to the contrary abounded, most of them came from the Graces themselves. It was not W. G.'s fault that he was the most famous doctor in England or that all the old medical jokes were fathered on to him, even jokes so venerable as the comment on a troublesome midwifery case: 'The baby's dead and the mother's in a bad way, but I do believe we can save the father.'

It is not improbable that he was himself the inventor, or at least the spreader, of such tales as that of the diffident patient's inquiry at the surgery door:

'Is the doctor in?'

'Of course he's in. He's been batting since Tuesday lunchtime.'

My favourite item of apocrypha is his counsel to the distracted mother of twins, who suspected her darlings of measles.

'Put 'em in bed together and don't bother me unless they get up to 208 for two before lunch.'

My own strong feeling is that, despite all this good-humoured nonsense, he was a good doctor. True, he was away from his practice much of the summer, but he employed a *locum* for the cricket season and an assistant all the year round. Even in the season he liked to be home from his cricket for the week-end and

as a general practitioner in a large working class practice, he would spend his Saturday evening and Sunday doing the rounds of his patients. His skills were those of the working G.P. of his period: no more, but certainly not less. What mattered in his doctoring, as in his cricket, was his enormous vitality. Something of his confidence, his optimism, his general strength could not be help being transferred to the patient. The men and women patients of his Bristol practice were grateful. They knew they had a good doctor; he was no specialist, but was uniformly kind, patient, jovial and, as Tennyson said of the Iron Duke, 'rich in saving common sense'. We have now made a profession of the social worker. In W. G.'s day the doctor in a working class parish was his own social worker. And W. G. was an astonishingly good one.

As a cricketer, he was like the racehorse *Eclipse* – the rest, nowhere. In his time, no batsman could touch him, though there were splendid batsmen all through his era. When he was at the top of his world, his colleagues and rivals in a Gentlemen v. Players match would include men like A. N. Hornby, A. P. Lucas, A. G. Steel, not to mention Richard Daft, R. G. Barlow, Arthur Shrewsbury and Ephraim Lockwood. Remember that his career stretched over forty years; he first played in the Gentlemen v. Players with R. A. H. Mitchell and against Grundy, Lockyer and James Lillywhite junior; when he finished his last game of the series there were men like Jessop, J. N. Crawford, Hayward, John Gunn and Trott in the sides. From first to last and in the middle he had known them all.

If W. G. was orthodox, it was because he invented orthodoxy. His strokes never looked ingenious or even clever; they were just the right strokes for every kind of ball. His stance was upright, his backlift high, his attitude poised for swift attack. The artist who painted his celebrated portrait for the Long Room at Lord's asked him: 'But, Dr Grace, would you stand as easily if the game were in a tight place?'

'Certainly,' replied W. G., 'because, after all, I should only be facing the next ball.'

This was his attitude in forty-one years of first-class cricket. His batting had grandeur, but no elegance; that is, it had not the sheer beauty of the batting of Palaret and Spooner or the shimmering magic of Ranjitsinhji. It was, like himself, plain, but not penny-plain. He did not dazzle as Trumper did or as so many of us have

seen Compton do. His batting was founded, as his Uncle had taught him and as Sir Leonard Hutton would counsel at this day, on the straight bat, on solid, not stolid defence. It is not paradoxical, even if it seems so, that an essentially hard-hitting, ever-attacking batsman should consider sound defence the first requisite. It was not a matter of cautious play; it was, as he would have said, a question of holding the bat right.

It was Ranji who said: 'W. G. discovered batting; he turned its many straight channels into one great winding river.' The true comment came from the hard-bitten north country bowlers whom he had consistently 'murdered': men like Tom Emmett and James Shaw. 'With him it was Grace before meat, Grace after meat and Grace all the time . . .' And old Fred Morley of Notts said of him, after being hammered to glory on a murderous wicket: 'He hit me for a couple of sixes off his eyebrows and then I bowled him through his flaming whiskers.' His strokes were what have become the orthodox strokes, mainly hard cutting and driving, but he made them more often and more forcefully than anybody had ever done before. He had a lucrative way of pushing a ball hard away to leg, of which James Shaw said: 'Oh, yes, he blocks the shooters, but he blocks 'em to t' boundary.' W. G. was more modest: 'I hate defensive strokes,' he said. 'You can only get three off 'em.'

He hit hard, because he was full of energy; he hit cleanly, because his stamina was inexhaustible. He would have scorned the modern batsman who cannily leaves ball after ball alone. He would have been puzzled by present-day talk about front-foot or back-foot batsmen. 'I've got two feet, haven't I?' he would have laughed.

Bob Thoms, the most respected umpire of his day, said that if W. G. had not been the best batsman of all time, he would have been the best bowler. Those who have seen Rhodes, Barnes, Larwood, O'Reilly and Lindwall may with clear conscience doubt this. But he was not unworthy to be named in the first half dozen or so, and it would be ridiculous to assert that a man who has taken nearly 3,000 wickets – only five bowlers ever took more – was not an extremely fine performer. If he often got good batsmen out with bad balls, delivered with the appearance of great cunning, that was only his fun. His old-fashioned round-arm bowling looked difficult when there was nothing in it and was at its most cunning when it looked innocent. W. G.'s innocence as a bowler was, in

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fact, more guileful than his guile. The ball that bewildered the batsman most was the one that did nothing at all. And, as might be expected, if he could not bat all day, his next favourite occupation was to bowl all day.

His fielding, like his batting, was voracious. He hated not being where the ball was. He took many of his wickets by inducing batsmen to swing at slow balls on the leg and find themselves caught on the long-leg boundary. He could not take catches off his own bowling at long-leg, but he would go after them practically anywhere else. His favourite ploy as he delivered a slow ball was to pound away to mid-off and the number of victims caught and bowled from there is just nobody's business. 'That's where he likes appealing from,' said E. M., most incorrigible of the Grace family jokers.

Tom Emmett's word for W. G. was after all the best one: he was a *Nonsuch*. We have learnt much and forgotten much since the Victorian age and whether we have altogether gained in the process is not to be argued here. But between 1848 and 1915 lived a man who became a legend but was richer in personality than the legend itself; in his own earthy, artful way a simple man; in his unsentimental way a lovable creature, because he was the man he was. He could shout you down in argument, but his heart, like Alfred Mynn's, was ever warm. He was a great Englishman, a great countryman, a great cricketer. A great cricketer? That was not all.

It was at first hard to compose the inscription for the Grace gate which you see every time you enter Lord's. The poets sent in their verses and the scholars their Greek or Latin funeral odes, but, set against the Falstaffian figure of W. G., they were not right. Suddenly the thought came to his old friend, F. S. Jackson, 'who had played for England as an undergraduate, in W. G.'s golden autumn. As he said the words, not a voice was raised in criticism. The decision was unanimous and this is what you see:

To the Memory of
William Gilbert Grace
THE GREAT CRICKETER.

TWO

Victor Trumper

by Neville Cardus

I HAVE NEVER met a cricketer who, having seen and played with Victor Trumper, did not describe him without doubt or hesitation the most accomplished of all batsmen of his acquaintance. 'I should have been proud to carry his bag,' said Charles Macartney of Victor; and Macartney himself has seldom been equalled, at any time, for brilliant, resourceful, and easily performed stroke-play in all conditions, fine weather or foul. The most handsome and most generous compliment of all to Trumper came from A. C. MacLaren, in a conversation with me. 'They used to talk of my "Grand Manner". Compared to Victor I was like a cab-horse side by side with a thoroughbred Derby winner.'

I saw him only three or four times, first at such a tender age that I need the reassurance of *Wisden* that I was actually at Old Trafford on June 24th 1902, when Trumper scored 104 for Australia, against England before lunch. I am certain I was at the match on the third and last day, a Saturday, in at the death – England beaten by three runs. I can see, with my mind eye yet, poor Fred Tate's stumps wrecked by the fastish left-handed Saunders. MacLaren often 'reconstructed' Victor's innings for me in our many talks together, a match-winning achievement if ever there was one. When MacLaren won the toss (in a three day match remember) the wicket was soft after rain – no 'covering' in those olden times. My plan, narrated MacLaren, was to keep Trumper quiet for two hours. Lockwood was unable to bowl more than a few overs before lunch, because the ground was so damp that he could scarcely find a foothold. So, MacLaren commanded his other bowlers, F. S. Jackson, Tate, Braund and Rhodes to 'keep Victor quiet, whatever else you do'. Thus one of cricket's subtlest skippers, with his tactics put into force by experienced and skilful masters of spin and length, sought to reduce Trumper to inactivity. The field was set to stop the fours, on a turf which robbed strokes of much power. 'In the second over' said MacLaren, 'Victor drove Jackson over the sight-board into the practice ground – and I couldn't ruddy well set one of my long-fields in the practice ground, could I?' After lunch, as the sun dried the Old Trafford earth, Lockwood went to work and took six wickets for 48.

In 1902, Trumper, not yet twenty-five years old, scored 2,500 runs in an English summer of rain and sun, on turning pitches,

against some of the finest spin bowlers the game has produced. Eleven centuries, two in the same match v Essex, each a dazzling, absolutely sure and controlled piece of batsmanship, set crowds everywhere agog. His name resounded everywhere. As a school-boy I at once worshipped him. He looked so like every school-boy's idea of the perfect batsman, not too muscular; he was actually slender of build, but good looking of face, and of graceful movement. The problem which worried me as a schoolboy arose from the fact that he was an Australian. Every schoolboy is fanatically eager to see and to know England has beaten Australia. I would pray at my bedside at night for an England victory. Yet I always hoped Victor would play a great innings every time. A predicament! Inspiration descended on me, solving my problem. I prayed thus: 'Please God, let Victor Trumper score a century against England tomorrow . . . out of an Australian all-out total of 124.'

I had attained the experienced age of twenty when I saw Victor with some practical knowledge of cricket, with much professional active participation in the game behind me to give my judgment some authority. At Manchester, in July 1905, Trumper scored 48, caught on the long-on boundary by J. T. Tyldesley, off Rhodes. As I watched I felt I had never before seen the like of this batsmanship, in point of grace, charm, gallantry and certainty, with power working as though hidden under a surface of disarming elegance. 'You couldn't set a field for him,' vowed MacLaren. 'He was the most fascinating batsman I have ever seen. He had grace, ease, style and power.' Thus Pelham Warner. 'Never was the "glow and glory of the game with the beautiful name" more freely scattered than by the charm of this incomparable master batsman.' And thus A. E. Knight, the studious Leicestershire professional. 'He had no single style but every style,' maintained C. B. Fry. 'Every stroke he made so fascinated me that I couldn't take my eyes off him,' said Ranjitsinhji. 'Aye', corroborated Wilfred Rhodes, 'aye, 'e was a good batter, was Victor.'

How can some notion of his batsmanship and personality be conveyed so that readers who never saw him might catch something of his presence and skill? I would suggest that your imagination tries to blend the best of Dexter when he is driving with the best of Frank Worrell, and Denis Compton. He was swift as a panther on his feet. He would leap yards from his crease. If first



W G Grace, The Great Cricketer



Victor Trumper Beau Ideal

view of the ball's length had deceived him and it was not coming through the air fully-curved enough, he would go back and at the last second, cut late with tremendous velocity past the slips – who, having seen Victor run out to drive, were now standing more or less erect and relaxing. He seldom, if ever, lunged forward. Like all great batsmen, he could 'play late'; he was, in his most dashing and cavalier strokes, *over* the ball. If he took chances it was because he loved cricket as sport, loved the gallant uncertainty of it. In any hour of Australia's need, he could put aside the gay Lothario in him, and render defence and defiance noble.

At Sydney, in December 1904, Australia batted a second time nearly 300 runs behind. Trumper scored 185 not out in ten minutes under four hours, with 25 boundaries – the tempo of obstruction and obduracy for Trumper! A. E. Knight described this innings with tears in his pen:

'A slender figure, wan and drawn of face, but spiritualised with the delicacy of ill-health, glides to the wicket. Nor ornament nor colour marked his featureless attire, the personality was all-dominating... Not in his fascinating collection of strokes, nor in their frank and open execution merely, lay the charm; it was a man playing away a power which was himself rather than in him. With luxuriant masterfulness, yet with the unlaboured easy naturalness... he diverted the ball in every conceivable direction.'

Ill-health? Yes, Victor's gorgeous fires of batsmanship seemed to burn all the brighter because he himself often seemed to carry visibly about him the touch or presence of mortality. He died in his thirty-eighth year. In 1909, his last summer in England, he scored a modest 211 in five innings in the Test matches, including a pure poem of 73 at Kennington Oval against S. F. Barnes, D. W. Carr ('googly'), Rhodes, Woolley and Sharp. He appeared then to be sadly fading. But he was granted by the gods that adored him, and were soon to take him, a last golden reaping against South Africa, in his own country, in 1910–1911. His scores in the five Test matches were 27 (run out), 159, 214 not out, 28, 7, 87, 31 and 71 not out = 661 runs, average 94.42. 'Googly' bowling had for the first time been developed to a high measure of control by South African back-of-the-hand spinner – such as Aubrey Faulkner, S. J. Pegler, A. E. Vogler and R. O. Schwarz. The new science troubled Trumper not at all, a fact which might well be born in mind by doubting Thomases who argue that Trumper would be

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at a loss against our 'modern' new-ball seamers. J. W. H. T. Douglas, who knew all about the seam and the new ball, frank and admiringly confessed that bowling against Victor he sometimes 'didn't know where to pitch them'. Pegler described how in the rubber of 1910-1911, when Trumper scored 214 not out at Adelaide, he bowled what he thought at the time was one of his best overs. 'I felt the ball spinning from my fingers beautifully. I knew that the length and flight through the air were going to be all right. And then Victor hit me for four fours of successive balls.'

On a vicious wicket at Sydney in 1905, New South Wales began an innings against Victoria. J. V. Saunders, who had won the rubber of 1902 for Australia at Old Trafford, caused the ball to rear head high. Laver, at the other end, swung from the off stump, sometimes lifting, sometimes skidding the ball like a stone over ice. Saunders, in his first over, missed Trumper's off stump by inches. Trumper retaliated on dancing toes. Twice he drove or pulled Saunders into Sydney's No. 2 ground. He scored 101 in fifty-seven minutes. Nobody else could middle a stroke at all. At Sheffield, in the 1902 rubber, he scored 62 in fifty minutes at the game's crisis. He 'did just what he liked with the England bowling', reports *Wisden*. The England attack that afternoon consisted of S. F. Barnes, Hirst, Jackson, Braund and Rhodes. In the first Australian innings, Barnes had taken 6 wickets for 49. Warner always was emphatic that the most marvellous innings he saw in all his career was Trumper's 74 in January 1904, made out of Australia's total of 122, on a terrible Melbourne 'gluepot'. Rhodes took 15 wickets in this Test match for 124. Trumper was absolutely at ease, swift on feet yet never apparently in a hurry. Whenever a fieldsman was moved he sent the ball to the area of the ground the said fieldsman had just been covering. The power of his strokes was concealed by his easy poise. We can say of Trumper, as we can say of Hobbs, that nobody ever saw him making an ugly or ill-bred stroke.

Trumper was, of course, born in Sydney. He played for South Sydney 'grade' club, at the age of sixteen, with no extraordinary performances for a while. He was given a chance against A. E. Stoddart's England XI of 1894, one of a 'Colts' assembly. He drove, cut and hooked 67 against Lockwood and Peel. He was a sick boy that day, but insisted on getting out of bed to take part in a match of so vast a significance to a young Australian cricketer.

Later in this season he was given a chance to prove himself in the State side. He was chosen to play for New South Wales. He failed, scoring only 6 and 5 not out v. Queensland. For a year or two he was forgotten by the State selectors. Then he reminded them in no uncertain tones of his bright and unique existence. In 1896, he joined the Paddington club, and next Australian summer he stirred cricketers throughout the land to talk in accent incredulous and multi-coloured. In eight innings for his Grade XI Victor scored, successively:

v. North Sydney	82
v. Central Cumberland	123
v. South Sydney	125
v. Waverley	85
v. Glebe	120 not out
v. Burwood	191 not out
v. Redfern	133 not out
v. Leichhardt	162 not out

Total 1,021, average 204.

He was barely twenty years old. Think of the stir and wonder the boy aroused in those far-off times, when wonder had not yet been staled in the world; and Australia was a remote place on the world's map, and Sydney, compared with the city today, was a small town, with the *Bulletin* and the *Sun*, the local papers on which the talents of Phil May, David Low and Lionel Lindsay were in the bud. Imagine the happy Saturdays in the 'Oval' at Paddington, Sydney when the boy Victor was at the wicket in full flight. Romance has left us now in 1966; the enchantment of distance has been blown away by aeroplane, radio, telephone, television. When I lived in Sydney, not long ago, I never trod the grass of the Paddington Oval without some warming of the heart.

One afternoon Victor scored no fewer than 335 against Redfern, with 22 fives and 39 fours. A hit over the fence counted five. So that every time he hit a five, he lost the 'strike'. Apparently our prodigy had no systematic coaching. M. A. Noble has given evidence to the effect that Trumper would listen quietly to advice and instruction from his seniors—then continue to go his own inspired ways. Once, M. A. Noble told me, New South Wales were playing South Australia at Sydney. A further trial was being given to Victor who was sent in first to bat against Ernest Jones,

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the fastest bowler in the world at this period of the game's history. Jones soon had two wickets, then Noble joined young Victor. 'The first ball I got from "Jonah"', swore Noble, 'came back a foot on a perfect wicket.' At the end of the over I walked down the pitch to talk to Victor. 'Say, son,' I whispered, 'you've been in longer than me - don't you think Jonah's chucking one or two?' Victor whispered back, 'Yes, sir, I think so, too - but don't say anything or they might take him off.' Whereupon Trumper put Jones to the sword; the faster Jones hurled them down, the more elegantly yet mercilessly Trumper treated him.

In spite of his young flowering of his talents, he did not 'walk' into the Australian XI of his period. Maybe the sheer originality of much of his batsmanship stood in his way for a while. Australian cricket round about 1900 remained based more or less on English late-Victorian methods and traditions: straight bat, balls on the offside struck to the off, a pull stroke round to square leg from the off-stump sheer blasphemy! Victor, on a bad wicket, would pull from the off-stump; he would cut from the middle-stump. Even on a hard, fast wicket he would pull and cut likewise. So, therefore, many a conservative critic was doubtful about Trumper - too 'flashy'. He was never 'flashy'. There was never a batsman who played less to the gallery than Trumper; his brilliance and unorthodoxy were natural, unaffected. He batted very much by instinct. The 'googly' was a fairly unknown quantity when B. J. T. Bosanquet bowled for the England team in Australia in 1903-04. Trumper, in fact, was immediately bowled by Bosanquet on a first acquaintance with the 'googly'. But he soon was master. He didn't distract himself by worrying about finger-action of the bowler. M. A. Noble, many times Victor's skipper, testified as follows: 'If he could not get to the pitch of the ball, the "wrong 'un" didn't matter; if it were bowled short there was plenty of time to detect the spin and deal with it after it had left the pitch...' Victor, as I say, hardly ever played forward too far; his eye and the reaction of mind and muscle acted so swiftly that, like lightning, he moved to the very spot, marking the difference between the slightly over-tossed and the slightly short ball. His fundamentals, his basic technique, were sound enough - as they were with Denis Compton. But he added his own variations to an inherited skill and repertory of strokeplay. It is astonishing today to read M. A. Noble's written statement that 'he would surprise

the bowler by going across the wicket and, with a straight bat, hit the good-length ball on the rise outside the off-stump with great force and along the ground between mid-on and square leg.' 'Ah,' says the sceptical 'modern' of 1966, 'but could he have made such a shot today from one of our best "seamers" with a new ball?' Well, I don't suppose he would put into practice this particular stroke while the 'shine' was operating. But our 'modern' sceptic might like to know that he treated Barnes, Hirst and Johnny Douglas with handsome contumely.

Yet he did hold out hostages to his youth. In 1903, when *Wisden* was summing-up Trumper's wonderful summer in England of 1902, Sydney Pardon prophetically wrote: 'Risking so much, he plays what I should call a young man's game, lightning quickness of eye and hand being essential to his success, and for this reason I should not expect him after twenty years or more of first-class cricket to rival such batsmen as Shrewsbury. A. P. Lucas and W. L. Murdoch...'

The prophecy came sadly true. In eight or nine years Trumper's lovely golden eagle was winged. Ill health, the disease that killed him in 1915, began, as we have seen, to do its ruinous work as early as 1909. His cricket was visited by a sort of inner debility; the strength faltered. Now and again a flush of the old radiance was as the hectic impermanent glow of sinking fires. The glorious renewal of his genius v. South Africa in 1910-1911 was the beginning of sunset. In the Australian summer of 1911-1912, the invading England had, in the attack S. F. Barnes at his greatest, with the formidable F. R. Foster, a devouring fast left-hand bowler, supported by J. W. H. T. Douglas, three masters of the 'new ball'. And there were J. W. Hearne and Hitchin, with Woolley and Rhodes for spin, if necessary - which wasn't often. Victor's performances in this rubber were modest - he didn't go in first, even! He began with 113, but he laboured, for him, three and a half hours. Then followed scores of 14, 13, 2, 26, 1 not out, 17, 28, 5 and 50. This half-century was his last Test match innings.

His main asset was an ability to see and decide at once what manner of ball was coming to him. George Hirst, not given to exaggeration, once argued that Victor at times had a ball 'weighed-up' even before it had left the bowler's fingers. He never used his pads primarily for defence. In a period when the l.b.w. rule

allowed batsmen to rely with impunity on their pads to bowling pitched outside the off-stump, so that off-breaks, common enough then, could be stultified at birth, Victor was l.b.w. only five or six times in all his 89 Test match innings. His stance at the wicket was relaxed, beautifully curved, just upright enough. His right hand gripped the middle of the handle, never did it go down to the blade. He wouldn't put a cover over the bat's handle. He liked to feel that his hands were absolutely 'in touch'; he would roughen the string on the handle with powdered resin. His driving carried a tremendous distance, once clean out of the Sydney enclosure into an adjoining show ground. There was no sign of severe physical effort; his strokes were so well-timed that the bowler himself could be said to have provided the motive-power. I sat on the grass at Old Trafford when Victor made 30 for Australia at Old Trafford in 1905. Walter Brearley sent him a fastish inswinger. Trumper played late and, with a turn of the right wrist and forearm, sent the ball past forward square-leg at such a pace that I couldn't get out of the way, as I hopped up from the turf. The ball struck my ankle; and for days I showed the bruise to my friends, young and old. And when the discolouration on my leg began to fade I tried to perpetuate it by application of a blue pencil. Victor didn't hesitate to hit over an obstructing fieldsmen's head. He could place the ball to a nicety in the air or over the grass. If ever he covered the stumps with his pads it was only because his feet went in front to perform a pull to the onside. Lockwood, on his day one of the most formidable of fast bowlers – Trueman *in excelsis* – propelled a fast yorker at Victor's leg-stump. Lockwood's hands went up in an appeal for leg before, a split-second in advance of a glance to the leg-boundary from the bat's meat. M. A. Noble was always glad to describe what he considered was Trumper's unique stroke, performed from a fast ball well up and making for the middle-stump. The bat met the ball on the half-volley. With a flick of the wrist it was dispatched forward of short-leg at a pace almost beating eyesight. This was, surely the stroke which bruised my ankle making me the most insufferably conceited schoolboy in England.

There is a certain irony in Trumper's experiences on cricket fields of England. He scrambled into the Australian team to this country of 1899, chosen at the last minute on condition that he would accept half of the bonus paid to each player at the tour's

end. Naturally he jumped at the chance. In these days of Test matches and World Cups everywhere, week after week, with the 'plane bringing Tokyo next door to Manchester, we can realise only by use of imagination what an adventure it was to a young cricketer, to go to the world's other end; it was a romantic voyage, as though to another realm. From Paddington Sydney, in 1899, to Lord's, it was a boxing not only of a geographical but a sociological compass. And at Lord's in 1899, the youth Trumper who so far had looked upon nothing more socially imposing than the Union Club in Sydney (from the outside), scored a century in his first Test innings at Lord's, under the eyes and inspection of the Pavilion and the Long Room, tall-hatted then, an exclusive domain. Victor caused the Pavilion and the Long Room to raise eyebrows that June afternoon long ago. He and Clem Hill each scored 135, and Trumper was not out. Australia won by 10 wickets, the match over before lunch on Saturday – imagine, Test matches began, in this opulent epoch, on Mondays or Thursdays, each extending three days only. In Australia, of course, Tests were played to a finish; and there is little evidence that the rate of scoring varied in these two entirely different circumstances. It is certain that Trumper, in every changing environment, under any sort of legal procedure, played the same inborn game directed by his generous chivalrous nature.

The irony of his experiences in England is indeed bitter-sweet. A baptism here in 1899, a rare promise and prophecy – 1,556 runs, average 34.57, the highest score of his career, 300 not out v. Sussex, in six hours. Next his wonderful English summer on the bowlers' pitches of 1902 – eleven centuries, 2,570 runs, average 48.49 in day-by-day conditions which rendered most batsmen more or less helpless. The fact is that, after 1902, we in England seldom saw his star, only in periodic glows of ascendancy, sparkle at its most lustrous. After 1902, he came to these shores only twice, in 1905 and 1909. In 1905 his Test innings amounted to 31, 8, 0, 11, 30, 4, 28. (Injury prevented him from batting in the first game of this rubber). In 1909 he fared only a shade or two better – 10, 1, 28, 27 not out, 2, 2, 48, 73, 20. A great hullabaloo would go up nowadays in this country if, say, Bowdrey, were to score in Test cricket only 323 runs in 15 completed innings. During one stretch of Trumper's strange barrenness, in 1909, his innings proceeded pitifully this way: 10, 8, 3, 27 not out, 2, 1, 7, 25, 0, 5.

Such inconsistency was beyond Bradman's capacity; he couldn't, had he tried, have failed with this persistent regularity.

The extraordinary point about Trumper's batsmanship is that, whether he was scoring prolifically, or scoring few runs at all, his play remained the same, thoroughly balanced, lovely to look at, absolutely untroubled. It was indeed as though his genius operated under some astral or horoscopic influence; sometimes his star was lustrously in ascendant, sometimes not. A famous cricketer who, by bad luck, saw only one innings of Trumper in his life, raved about him. 'It was against Surrey at the Oval in 1909', he said 'I'll never forget him' – he was recalling the event forty years later – 'never'. 'How many did he make that day?' I asked. 'Oh, about 20.' We can no more get an idea of Trumper's batsmanship by looking at the averages and the statistics than we can find the essential quality of a composition of Mozart by adding up the notes. Yet even judged by figures, his short life's performances are impressive enough – 16,939 runs, average 44.57. Time after time he gave his wicket away usually to some hard-working unlucky bowler. Moreover, he was constantly throwing down the gauntlet to fortune. He was really the living embodiment of the game; cricket incarnate, in an age when cricket was played as a game, and loved for its glorious uncertainty. In the mechanical age of today he would have seemed a visitant from another dimension. The hour brings forth the man; a certain environment produces a genius that sums-up the general climate. Trumper blossomed at a time when the game was still unstaled, not satiated by records of achievement; when there were countless deeds yet to do. In 1902 Trumper scored two centuries in the same match v. Essex at Leyton. The feat had been done before then several times in first-class cricket – as far back as 1892 by George Brann for Sussex against Kent. But, in 1902, two hundreds in one match was yet a thing to wonder at, especially when Trumper scored the first of his 'double' 109 in ninety minutes.

He revelled in attacking the first ball of a match. M. A. Noble thought that Trumper's only failing as batsman was his eagerness to score from the match's first ball. 'Spoil a bowler's length and you've got him.' This was Victor's *credo*. Hanson Carter, the Australian wicket-keeper, worshipped Trumper almost to idolatry. And Carter as a rule was a grudging captious critic. 'Victor' he asserted 'left all batsmen behind him when conditions – the state

of the wicket or the state of the game – were at heavy odds against him. If things were going comfortably for his side, and the pitch was easy, he would make way for some other batsman, somebody out of form.' In the Australian season of 1907–1908, he was bowled for 0 by Barnes in the third Test match of the rubber v. England. In the following Test he bagged a 'pair' c Crawford b Fielder 0, b Crawford 0. Three noughts in a row. Next test he came to the wicket, second innings, when defeat threatened Australia. He scored 166 in four hours. J. N. Crawford, by the way, took 30 wickets in this 1907–1908 rubber, average 24.73. His victims were so illustrious that few bowlers have gathered spoils so famous in one and the same series – Trumper (three times), Noble (three times), Armstrong (five times), Clem Hill (twice), Macartney (three times), Gregory (twice).

Victor's farewell to Test cricket in the 1911–1912 Australian rubber was not as dimly-lighted as might be thought from the bare facts of the record books. In the first game, as I have already recounted, he scored 113, not at all in cavalier vein; in fact, the innings proved the basic soundness of his technique. It was at the outset of this Test match, at Sydney in December 1911, that J. W. H. T. Douglas, captain of England because 'Plum' Warner was a sick man, opened the attack with the new ball, Frank Foster at the other end. Sidney Barnes was rightly indignant; he naturally expected to have prior claim over any other bowler in the world. Australia amassed 447, winning the match, and England won the next four of the same rubber. Subsequently Barnes was given the new ball at the outset of an Australian innings; he 'showed 'em' at Melbourne, when he overwhelmed Bardsley, Hill, Kelleway and Armstrong for a single run in five overs. Trumper dazzled the grass with two off-drives before Frank Foster bowled him with one which swung left-arm from off to leg – then hit the off-stump, very fast from the pitch. At Adelaide, a week or two afterwards, Bill Hitch of Surrey bowled Victor for 26, second highest score in Australia's all out total of 133. Next innings, Trumper scored 1 not out in an Australian aggregate of 476; presumably he was on the casualty list. He finished fourth in the Australian batting averages for this 1911–1912 series; and his 'curtain' on Test cricket for ever was a perfect peach of a half-century exactly – c. Woolley b Barnes – at Sydney in February 1912. 'Perfect peach' was the description by George Gunn of this farewell innings; George was

on the field to see and savour every stroke. There was bloom on them all.

He was not among the Australians who came to England in 1912 to take part in the 'Triangular' tournament, with South Africa and England the other contestants. There was a row between top-class Australian players and the Australian Board of Control about the appointment of a manager. Trumper, Hill, Armstrong, Ponsford, Cotter and Carter withdrew from the team selected as a consequence. It is difficult to imagine Trumper in any acrimonious dispute; he was probably drawn into it. As the summer in England in 1912 was alternately wet and sunny, 'sticky' pitches abounding, the chances are that Trumper again would have been in his element. In his own land, the gods watched his career go out in a nobly valedictory splendour. For his own State of New South Wales, he scored, in the Australian summer of 1912-1913, 843 runs, average 84.30, with 201 v. South Australia, composed *grazioso* and *vivace*, in three-and-a-half hours. Then, February 1914, he voyaged to New Zealand, member of Sir Arthur Sims' 'Australian XI'. He and Sims scored 433 together in an eighth wicket stand v. Canterbury at Christchurch; Trumper 293-200 in just beyond two hours, the next 93 in seventy minutes. A month later he played the last of all his innings-81 v. New Zealand at Auckland; l.b.w. b Sneddon. The golden eagle brought down finally by one Sneddon! Fifteen more months and he died; and the Sydney sidewalks were crowded deep to see the funeral go by, and all the flags were at half-mast.

'Recorded centuries leave no trace

On memory of that timeless grace . . .'

Thus John Arlott sums-up Trumper's genius and achievement in a few devotedly-turned words.

Trumper in his Test career scored eight centuries, not many according to reckoning in terms of our modern run and 'ton' de-based currency. In Trumper's day Test matches were confined to engagements between England, Australia and South Africa. Not until 1902 did Australia play against South Africa. He batted 15 innings v. South Africa for 900 runs, average 75 exactly. At his death, nobody had equalled his number of eight centuries in Test matches; Clem Hill came next with seven. The best bowlers, of all types, did their damndest against him, fast, slow left arm spin, medium pace, 'seamers', 'googly'-Lockwood, Bradley, Kotze,

Fielder, Rhodes, Blythe, Woolley, Mead, F. S. Jackson, Hirst, Arnold, Barnes, Crawford, Douglas, F. R. Foster, Hitch, D. W. Carr, Faulkner, Pegler, J. W. Hearne – all these, in Test matches, connived and toiled to win his wicket, bowlers who, taken in turn more or less exhausted the known science and repertory of their craft. Nothing which has developed in bowling since the heyday of these practitioners has produced a ball not known and mastered by Trumper. Moreover, he played thirty-four of his eighty-nine Test innings in three-day matches in England on uncovered wickets, all of them prepared not more elaborately than for day-by-day county wickets of the period. 'Never another Trumper' said H. L. Collins, the Australian captain of the mid 1920s – and he saw and played with Hobbs, Sutcliffe, Woolley, Hendren, Ponsford, J. M. Taylor at their high noon. He did not necessarily mean that Trumper was the most consistent run-maker in his experience. He lived to see Bradman enslaving all bowlers, and scoring a century every other innings or two – or three. Bradman elevated – or reduced, according to your point of view – batsmanship to an exact science. His particular genius – nothing less – announced that we were entering the technological age. Before him was cast the shadow of the computer. No, I am not disparaging Bradman's marvellous skill. His punitive and swift killing strokes were perpetually thrilling, and the cause of wonder. As construction, man-made and man-controlled, the aeroplane is a greater cause for mortal wonder than a bird in flight. The flight of a bird we take for granted as a natural, effortless habit on the part of a bird. Victor Trumper's batting appealed to us simply as one of his natural born habits or functions. The bat in his hands was as the violin of Kreisler or Menuhin, a part of his active creative consciousness. 'It was enough,' said Charles Macartney, 'to see him pick up a bat and twiddle the handle, trying the balance.'

Trumper ran a sports shop in Sydney. He was, of course, no business man. He often gave away tackle to boys not able to afford the price. As a man he was as generous as Trumper the batsman, not knowing the value of money, just as he seemed not to know the value of runs or averages. One day a man and his son entered Victor's shop. The man wanted to buy a bat for the boy's birthday. Victor tried a few small sizes, then recommended one. He asked the boy when he would be playing his first game with it. 'Next

Saturday'; it was now the Monday before. So Trumper pretended he would like to keep the bat a day or two properly to 'season' it. He himself took it out to use on the Wednesday in a State match, scoring 50 or so with it. And when the boy called for his bat on the Friday Victor gave it to him. 'It's in good condition son,' he said, 'I've tested it myself. Bring it back if you don't like it and I'll give you another...' The boy, of course, soon found out to what use Victor had put the bat. He was made the proudest boy in Australia. To his life's end the bat was his most cherished possession. 'Coming out of the London Coliseum one wet night,' relates M. A. Noble, 'Victor saw a boy shivering in a door-way, unshod, selling sheet music, popular songs of the day. He bought up the whole stock-in-trade.' He was, obviously, a man of most endearing nature, shy and modest. Everybody I have known who knew Trumper have agreed without hesitation – one of nature's gentlemen. His style, as a cricketer, was the man himself; 'It was a pleasure and a privilege to bowl at him,' vowed Leonard Braund.

Jack Fingleton, known as Australia's most obdurate opening batsman in Bradman's government, and now as renowned as Australia's most gifted and critical writer on cricket, was only seven years of age when Victor died. He never saw Victor, yet he has written of him this way: 'So often have I listened to stories of him, so often have I seen a new light come into the eyes of people at the mention of his name, so much have I read of him that I am prepared to believe that nobody, before or since, ever achieved the standards of batsmanship set by Trumper.' Nobody, least of all myself, would wish to make a plaster-saint out of any hero of cricket. Let history remember that Trumper was human, therefore somewhere given to error. But frankly, I can unearth no single shred of evidence to support any suggestion that he was not consistently kind, modest and friendly, as a man; and, as cricketer, almost casually masterful, brilliant, chivalrous, ready to throw his wicket away if his team's position was safe, the natural *beau ideal* of a cricketer through and through. Maybe one of his most remarkable achievements was his ability to remain, a Sydney-sider of his period, a lifelong tee-totaller and non-smoker, yet a boon companion to the roughest and hardest-living 'diakum' colleague. In those days the Australian team travelled short distances out of London – to Leyton, for instance – by 'wagonette' – i.e. *char-a-banc*. Joe Darling, the captain in 1902, would get into the

coach last of all, take a backward view of his fellow travellers and ask, 'Is Victor here?' If Victor was there Darling would give the driver instructions to start his horses. Other Australians might be aboard, or might not. But Victor was 'here'.

May be if he were playing cricket today some reason could be discovered for faulting him. Other times other manners – and other moral and ethical values. Victor, as we have seen, was obsessed by the idea that the first ball bowled at him, at a game's outset, should be hit for four. He believed that every half-volley was a potential boundary. Such views and feelings about the game might well be considered subversive nowadays . . . old hat, 'ham'. There is a famous photo which depicts Trumper running out to drive – yards out. A summer or two ago I was inspecting this portrait in the pavilion at Kennington Oval. A famous batsman of the present epoch was with me. 'Was he really top class?' queried the famous batsman of the present epoch, referring to Trumper and the portrait, 'look where he is – he's *asking* to be stumped'. (This famous batsman of the present epoch had not left *his* crease for several summers, not since, roughly speaking, June 1949). The fact is that Victor was seldom stumped, not once in a Test match. He often maintained that if a batsman kept his eye on the ball it was almost impossible to 'miss it with such a wide piece of wood'. Compton shared one of Trumper's secrets: no matter how unorthodox the approach to the performance of a stroke, no matter how illogically the feet took the body to and over the ball, at the moment of contact the bat's middle, or thereabouts, was applying the stroke's generating force. I must not overdo a comparison between Trumper and Compton; I merely suggest that the two batsmen had a kindred originality of mind, and used a basically sound technique accordingly. There was no rotundity about a Trumper innings; he was without superfluity of flesh or substance. An innings by Trumper took its flight on wings; or, to try yet another metaphor, he batted as an Arkle runs and leaps. He was, among Australian cricketers, of aristocratic breeding in his batsmanship.

He could not, had he tried, perform a plebeian stroke. The short-lived Archie Jackson came out of the Trumper stable; so did Alan Kippax. To repeat Herbie Collins's tribute, 'there'll never be another Trumper', never his peer for mingled skill and instinctive power to express the (let us hope) abiding spirit of cricket.

THREE

Jack Hobbs

by John Arlott



Jack Hobbs – The Master



Walter Hammond – The Athlete

THE TITLE of 'The Master' was bestowed upon Jack Hobbs by the cricketers who played with and against him. No one – least of all the bowlers whom he both dominated and charmed – ever queried his right to it.

There has long been debate as to whether W. G. Grace or Sir Jack was the greater batsman. The comparison could never be effectively made. They did not meet until The Doctor had descended from his towering eminence and Sir Jack was only upon the foothills of his. Each stood out as peerless in his age. Each not only met the initial challenges of the game of his youth, but created fresh techniques to counter the new tactics of the bowlers to whom they were the paramount problem. If W. G. dominated the Middle Ages of cricket and laid the foundations of the modern game, it was Jack Hobbs who gave it the precise and highly skilful shape it bears today.

Sir John Berry Hobbs can properly be discussed in superlatives. His contemporaries in his mighty prime had no doubt that, on all wickets and against all kinds of bowling, he was the finest batsman of their experience. Those who knew him personally recognised in him a character which may best be described as noble. This is not the fulsome language of epitaph, but considered statement of fact.

It was my fortune, as a schoolboy, that the first game I ever saw above club and village level was the Oval Test Match of 1926, when Jack Hobbs's century was so important a factor in England's win which took The Ashes from Australia. Thirty-seven years later, I was at his bedside shortly before he died. In the interim I had watched him make over two thousand runs – including ten centuries – and the wondering schoolboy had been admitted to the friendship of a man who seemed no less a hero at close quarters.

Much of that which follows comes from conversation with Sir Jack. He was a simple, unaffected talker, objective, humorous and clear, invariably modest and by nature reluctant to decry anyone as man or cricketer. Often his recalled conversation will provide definition of an event or a person, so that not only all the achievements recorded here are his, but much of the narrative also. It would become wearisome to the reader if every word of his were

acknowledged by quotation marks. But one statement – of which I possess a recording – should be quoted verbatim: ‘I suppose I had a lowly upbringing and I thought cricket was a chance of making money – I had to earn a living, you see – but I always wanted to play cricket, to become a professional: and if I had my time over again I would do it again, oh, I enjoyed it to the full: I never wanted to become an amateur: I didn’t feel it was in me.’

There is the humility which was, in Jack Hobbs, an ingredient of nobility. He was, too, a contented man. He believed that life had used him well and it is significant that, even after he had received his knighthood, he still used the prefix ‘Mr’ for the amateurs of his day: it was always ‘Mr Fender’, Mr Jeacocke’ or ‘Mr Holmes’.

THE GROWTH OF MASTERY

John Berry Hobbs – Berry was his mother’s maiden name – was born at 4, River Place, Cambridge on 16th December 1882, the first of twelve children of John Hobbs, a net-bowler, umpire and groundsman first at Fenners and then at Jesus College, Cambridge. The young Hobbs used sometimes to carry his father’s lunch to the college ground and would linger to watch the cricket. He was never coached. Once his father bowled to him in the nets: the boy was not wearing pads and, when he ‘sensed’ an off-break he moved wide of the leg stump to make room to play it. His father rebuked him for backing away – and Jack could not bring himself to explain that he had *felt* which way the ball would turn. He himself attributed his technique largely to watching the undergraduates’ matches on the Jesus College ground. He had, however, an occasional chance to see first class players. He could watch the Essex players, Bill Reeves and Harry Carpenter, playing on Parker’s Piece, near his home.

His father, of whom he had always retained most affectionate memories, used to take the boy with him when he acted as a stand attendant during the more important matches at Fenners. Jack knew – without, of course, remembering – that he was taken to the match between the University and the Australians in 1886 at the age of three: and he had sharp recollections of the Australian match of 1893, when he was ten, with A. O. Jones, Ranji and Stanley Jackson playing for the University and Syd Gregory,

Giffen, Turner, Trumble and Bannerman among the Australians. For years, too, until he took part in it, he never missed watching the match at the end of the season, when Tom Hayward brought up a team of first-class players to meet a local eleven. He always admired Hayward immensely; at first, boyishly, because he was a Cambridge man who was a famous cricketer: subsequently, and even after they began to open the Surrey innings together, for the majesty of his stroke-play. There were those who, later, claimed to see reflections of Hayward's style in Hobbs and it would be surprising if the younger man had not imitated his local giant, if only in mannerisms. But certainly, though Hayward was responsible for Hobbs joining Surrey, he never coached him.

The young Hobbs practised assiduously; not at nets, rarely with any of the usual facilities nor in company but, like Bradman, alone. Like Bradman, too, he used a stump as a bat, throwing a tennis ball against a wall and hitting it back again and again as it rebounded: thus he perfected his 'eye'. He used also to play strokes at an imaginary ball as he later counselled young players to do, and as he himself relished doing as long as he could handle a bat. When he demonstrated a stroke indoors, he recalled the phrase used of the Victorian Joseph Guy – 'all ease and elegance, fit to play before the Queen in Her Majesty's parlour'.

Untaught and with few advantages, Jack Hobbs did not play in an organised cricket match, even between boys, until he was twelve and, until well into his teens, his play was limited largely to evening games. Yet from this unhelpful beginning emerged the most flawless technique the game of cricket has ever known. How are we to account for it? How, indeed, are we to account for genius in any field? Two ingredients seem usually to be present – a single-minded devotion to the subject; and a background in which the activity is accepted as a part of daily life. The great cricketers – and since 'great' is a great word, they are few – seem generally to have come from homes where cricket was an accepted part of the pattern, usually with fathers who were faithful, if undistinguished, performers at the game. Here it is not inappropriate to recall a boyhood friend of mine, the son of a sound but undistinguished stone-mason. To his father's pride, the boy qualified for the Civil Service, and was never trained or intended for a stone-mason. But when he was at home on holiday he would go to his father's work-

shop and, picking up chisel and hammer, work with supreme skill, cutting perfectly and at remarkable speed through flaws in the stone which his father declared he himself could never have negotiated. Perhaps it is that the child absorbs the father's skill and ideals so early and completely that they become virtually instinctive. Certainly Jack Hobbs admired his father and absorbed the idea of cricket from, and through, him.

This is not to argue that Jack Hobbs was an infant prodigy who scored centuries from childhood. In fact he never made a hundred until he was eighteen – which recalls one of his characteristic, chuckling memories. To score a century was the high ambition of his early teens and once, when he was sixteen, he was playing in an evening match. One of the spectators was a friend – and one of his earliest supporters – who worked on the local newspaper, and was entrusted to bring back the match-score to be printed in the cricket columns. Jack Hobbs reached 90 when he was given out l.b.w. It was, apparently, not a good decision; but Jack accepted it philosophically – he never grumbled about umpires. His journalistic friend, however, was hugely indignant and he saw to it that the version of the score printed in the paper contained – ‘Hobbs not out 90’.

He regularly scored twenties in choirboy matches when he was twelve: a century in evening cricket at eighteen: and in the same year – 1901 – 32 playing as an amateur for Cambridgeshire, and 26 not out against a team brought by Tom Hayward to play a charity match on Parker's Piece. He worked as assistant to his father on the Jesus College ground until 1902 when he went as assistant groundsman and second eleven net-bowler to Bedford College. After the school term, he was paid ten shillings to play for Royston against Hertfordshire Club and Ground: he scored 119. Local talk about him reached Tom Hayward who wintered in his native Cambridge, and he ordained that Bill Reeves of Essex – later an umpire and the central figure of some rich ‘character’ stories – should bowl to Hobbs for twenty minutes. As a result, Hayward recommended Hobbs to Surrey. At the beginning of the 1903 season he reported, nervously but hopeful, to The Oval, where he scored 37 and 13 in his two innings in trial matches. As a result he was offered, and excitedly accepted, a contract of thirty shillings a week during the season, £1 during the winter, during a two-year qualification period for Surrey. To his enduring

sorrow, his father did not live long enough to see him take even this first step to eminence.

In the first of those two years he had a batting average in the thirties for both Surrey Club and Ground and their Colts: in the second, 43 for Club and Ground and, released to play for Cambridgeshire in the Minor Counties, he scored a couple of centuries, both against Hertfordshire. He did not, however, play for the Surrey Second XI. In those two years, though, he had the opportunity to watch – at close quarters in the nets – the batting of Tom Hayward, Jack Crawford and the ageing Bobby Abel. From them he absorbed much: and ‘absorbed’ is the correct word for, oddly enough, he was not an analyst of batsmen. He came to understand bowling technique but batting, for him, seems to have been a matter of sensibility: he *felt* it, and he absorbed it. He copied no one: he looked at batting and understood it.

In 1905 Jack Hobbs was twenty-two years old. Many men much younger have been established county cricketers and a number have played in Tests. Hobbs had not even appeared in Second XI cricket. He thought that he would be promoted to the Surrey Second XI in this summer. But he was picked for the county’s opening match of the season – against the Gentlemen of England, who were captained, with historic fitness, by W. G. Grace. Hobbs went in first with Tom Hayward and made 18 (joint highest score) in Surrey’s first innings of 86 all out and 88 (described in the press as ‘admirable’) in the second. Chosen for the county’s first Championship match – with Essex – he scored 58 and 155, and was given his county cap.

At this point, the story – at least the heart of the story – is complete. The groundsman’s son from Cambridge had become a first-class batsman. Only two seasons later he was picked to tour Australia and there he entered on his twenty-two year period as England’s opening batsman. That 155 against Essex was the first of 197 centuries in first-class cricket; the last of them was made against Lancashire, twenty-nine years afterwards, when he was rising fifty-two.

By 1905 he possessed the technique which – with adjustments according to circumstances and the years – gave him such command over the bowlers of thirty years that the title of ‘The Master’ was his by unquestionable right.

THE REIGN OF THE MASTER

He was the subject of an entire book called, appropriately enough, *The Perfect Batsman* (1923) by A. C. Maclaren who, somewhat surprisingly, saw little difference between the Hobbs of the 1905-1914 period and the immediate post-war years. Jack himself always divided his batting into two phases, with the first World War as the watershed. Incidentally, figures show that in the ten years to 1914, he scored 65 centuries: from 1919 to 1934 – between the ages of 36 and 51 – another 132. Yet he himself said categorically ‘I was never the player after the War that I was before – I couldn’t be, I couldn’t play the strokes, I was too old.’

In that earlier period he was undoubtedly an immensely exciting player: he was fast – he always was at great pains to keep himself perfectly fit – his eye was sharp and his fundamental soundness, with command of all the strokes, made him a consistently successful attacker, adroit on bad pitches and there, as in all conditions, murderous in his pounce on anything even remotely loose.

A striking number of their contemporaries likened the pre-1914 Hobbs to Victor Trumper – the legendary figure of Australian batting – who blended complete style, gaiety and superbly judged risk with an attacking outlook.

Jack Hobbs’s power of hitting was particularly marked at this time. His timing – the true root of all striking power – was always good: but over the early years he struck the ball surprisingly long distances for one who was never heavily built. He was 5’ 9½” tall and, for most of his active life, weighed within a pound or two of 11½ stones. His wrists were superb pieces of mechanism and his hands were powerful – wide in the palm, with strong, but not long, fingers. His grip was at the middle of the bat, hands close together and his stance, through all his early days, markedly pure – almost upright and sideways-on – though, in later years, as his eye grew less sharp, he tended to come round towards the two-eyed stance.

By the time he came into the Surrey team he had taught himself, by observation and practise, most of batting knowledge. But he was soon to show that he could face new problems and solve them. Rather unusually for a batsman of the so-called ‘Golden Age’, although he possessed all the off-side strokes, he was immensely strong on the leg side. This attribute was to serve him well when inswing and off spin – which, of course, had been long in existence

– were given fresh significance by use in conjunction with a ‘leg-trap’ field. Hobbs was the creator of the modern technique of playing the leg stump attack and, it must be said, among those who were content that, against such an attack, the batsman was fully justified in deliberate pad-play.

His first major triumph of innovation lay in meeting and overcoming googly bowling in the hands of its four great South African practitioners – Schwarz, Vogler, White and Faulkner. In 1909–10 they re-introduced Bosanquet’s former bow-at-a-venture as a precision weapon so effective as to win a Test series and to reduce every English batsman to an average below 34, except Hobbs – 67.37. This was his first great triumph as an *original* batsman – which enabled him to stand alone. It is important, too, that it was achieved on matting wickets – ‘the ultimate examination of batsmanship’ – of which he had no previous experience.

While Jack always spoke sadly of the fact that Tom Hayward was so baffled by googly bowling that his self-confidence was completely undermined, he maintained that he, himself, did not ‘read’ the googly bowlers’ hands. At first, he admitted, he was quite puzzled by it and dealt with it more or less by instinct. Whenever he could, he went right back, watched the ball off the pitch and played it by quick adjustment. If it was pitched so far up that he could not play back, he went forward and smothered the spin. After a few innings, however, he said that he ‘felt something different’ as soon as the googly was bowled. That extra sense served him well over many years, for he maintained that he never did ‘pick’ the googly from the hand action.

The 1919 season of experimental, two-day, Championship matches was Jack’s time of major re-adjustment. He scored 2,594 runs at an average of 60.32: but he was beginning to find that some of the strokes of his youth – the lofted drive over the head of a fast bowler, the forward leg glance, the finer of his cuts – were costing him his wicket with an uneconomic frequency. He forthwith pruned his play to suit his advancing years.

It is not to be disputed that the Hobbs of the nineteen-twenties was less superficially exciting to watch than the pre-1914 player who took, with heady success, such risks against good bowlers. Yet his later mastery was fascinating in its completeness. In two basic ingredients he was unmatched by any other player – except, possibly, Don Bradman, who may have been equally good in these

respects, but was certainly not better. The first was his judgment of length. He once said 'The thing that gets men out most often is not break, or swing or speed, it's misjudging length so that they play forward when they ought to play back, or back when they ought to play forward.' Here he rarely erred and this speed of judgment was the first element in his superb positioning. The second was the smooth, quick footwork which took him to the right point so early that often he seemed to be there waiting for the ball to arrive.

There is a soundly based tendency among students of the game to divide batsmen into front-foot and back-foot players. It was the essence of Jack Hobbs's batting that he was neither: he was both: whichever was right for the ball bowled. 'I always liked to play back: I suppose that was because I liked to play the ball after I had seen what it was going to do: and perhaps I was quick enough to play back to bowling that was not much short of a length: yet I have got to admit that, when I was really in trouble, I always played forward.' A few moments later he said 'You see, really, you don't make up your mind to go back or forward, you just *feel* which you ought to do.' The ultimate word on Jack's batting should be that his feeling in this matter was more nearly infallible than anyone else's.

The memory is still with me of the first time I ever saw him bat. The local batting heroes who captured a small boy's enthusiasm tended generally towards extravagance or lusty long hitting. But here however was this famous player apparently pottering about – for all the world like a man in his garden plot – his only mannerisms the invariable twirl of his bat before he took guard. Often his genius was only apparent when one saw the difficulties of the batsman at the other end. Cool, neat, unhurried, he made batting look amazingly simple, as any master craftsman does. Watch a cabinet-maker at work, how he knows where his tools are, picks them up with a familiar grasp and uses them like an extension of his arms. Hobbs used his bat with utter familiarity: it seemed less a weapon than an integral part of him; as a sculptor is said to 'release' a piece of sculpture from the stone, so his best innings seemed like a sympathetic fashioning of the bowling.

Jack had high ideals such as, in some men, would produce a prig: and he was so perfectly skilled in batting that he might have been a prim, copy-book player. He never came within hailing

distance of either of those two dangers because he had a sense of humour which was at times downright impish – though never malicious. He would play tricks in a game – sometimes with strategic intent. Thus he used often to outwit Charlie Parker of Gloucestershire, one of the finest of all left-arm spinners. Certainly Parker turned the ball as sharply as any of his type and his pace was not truly slow; indeed, it was nearer medium, so that the batsman had little time to get to the pitch of the ball and drive it. The record books are full of the amazing figures of the destruction he worked on sticky wickets. He was rarely punished in such conditions. But it was the fact that he did not take punishment well. So, when Parker came on to bowl on a turning pitch, Jack Hobbs, as a considered gambit, used to go down to him and hit him over extra cover until he dropped short, when he rocked back and cut him, or hooked against the spin. ‘So’ Tom Goddard once told me ‘I have seen Charlie Parker fielding in the deep when he should have been skittling Surrey out – because he was afraid to bowl at Jack.’ At times Jack indulged in sheer virtuosity. Bill Bowes tells how, on his first encounter with ‘The Master’, he bowled a ball slightly short of a length and at his full speed – which was extremely hostile – outside the off stump. Jack strolled across and pulled it through mid-wicket for four. ‘I’d seen it happen to slow bowlers’ said Bill ‘but never to anyone of my pace: and, as I stood there, flabbergasted, George Macaulay burst out laughing at me – “He does that to everybody” he said’. Once Arthur Mailey was brought on to bowl his leg breaks on a responsive wicket of some pace. He dropped a leg break near middle-and-off and turned it sharply to the off: Jack walked outside the off-stump, whipped it for four to square leg and, looking down the pitch with a smile said ‘Poor old Arthur, they always put you on when the ball won’t turn.’

This was an aspect of the humanity which informed and, indeed permeated, his cricket. He was not simply a man who played cricket: he was an absorbed cricketer who followed his chosen craft with unfailing enjoyment. On rare occasions he felt stale – and he was aware of this danger, not only in his own case but also in respect of players of later days who, through more overseas tours, were, he thought, in great danger of losing their edge. Then he had no doubt of the remedy: he went from cricket: but it usually took only a few days to renew his appetite for batting.

He had the ability to push and 'manufacture' runs against the tightest bowling. He was, too, a superb bad wicket player: many of his contemporaries thought that, while others might approach him in easy conditions, he was at his incomparable best when the advantage lay with the bowlers.

A single example of his ability in this direction lay in the Surrey-Leicestershire match at Leicester in 1920. It was played on a wicket so bad that three batsmen were so badly injured by lifting deliveries that they could not complete their innings. On that pitch Jack Hobbs made 134 (more than the entire Leicestershire side in either innings) in 95 minutes – one six and 19 fours – without giving a chance: Surrey had won by an innings midway through the second day.

Although his batting was so ingrained as to seem instinctive, he was also a considerable strategist. For years after he finished playing he remained an exhaustive source of reference on the resources and tactics of every major bowler of his time. He could say with unfailing accuracy which way – as a rule, or for variation – they made the ball swing or break. He knew those with a slower ball, how one or another used the crease, and which would wilt under attack. He had, too, astute eye for field-setting. He batted with a picture of the field in mind and, in addition to his meticulous placing of the ball through gaps, he had the ability to control the strength of a stroke. Instead of hitting the ball hard at a fieldsman, he would check it to take a single while the ball was reaching a fieldsman who would have been 'saving the one' to a strong hit. His ability to 'steal' singles was always a feature of his play, particularly with his three great partners, Andrew Sandham, Wilfred Rhodes and Herbert Sutcliffe. He regarded Rhodes as the finest runner he ever knew – they never called, but simply looked and went, often for non-existent runs from strokes which sent the ball only a few feet: yet only once did their partnership end in a run out. At times it seemed that the first stride of a run was built into his stroke and, for the batsman opposite, he was always backing up, and his speed of foot was such that he was never loth to go for a single which could possibly be gained by quick starting and fast running.

He never had a 'bad trot' in his career. During the historic period of 1925 when the newspapers headlined 'Hobbs Fails Again' he averaged more than forty runs an innings. Up to 21st July of that

summer he had batted twenty-eight times and scored twelve centuries: the twelfth was the 125th of his career. W. G. Grace had made 126, and now press and newsreels began to follow Hobbs, waiting for him to equal the Doctor's record. This unsettled him as no bowler ever did. He scored useful forties and fifties but, for more than three weeks, he did not make a hundred – the height of failure! Then, on the 15th August, against Somerset at Taunton he scored 101 and the reporters and cameramen went home content. In the second innings, on that now quiet ground, Hobbs proceeded to make the century which seemed to him most important – which took him *past* W. G.'s total.

No one, opponent or critic, ever suggested that he had a weakness. It is true that in 1932 – when he was in his fiftieth year – he staged a simple but dignified protest against Bill Rowes bowling bouncers at him at The Oval. But we may note that, in that match, Hobbs scored 90 while no one else on either side made more than 37.

The bowlers of the twenties were content that he could, if he wanted, have made a hundred every time he went to the wicket. He did so often enough when Surrey were in trouble to lend authority to that argument.

When his side was in trouble he conceived it his professional duty to make every possible run. But he liked to bat for fun and when Surrey – on their flawless pitches of those years and with a long list of fine batting – were flourishing in easy circumstances, he would try his few experiments, play freely for an hour or so and then give away his wicket to some worthy opposing bowler – usually an old colleague whose skills and devotion he admired. Once he had made a hundred, unless the position demanded more of him, he invariably threw away his wicket – often in a flurry of almost outrageous strokes, executed with increasing extravagance until he overstepped the bounds possible even to him.

He scored more runs than anyone else of any period in first-class cricket. Yet he did not play an innings at that level until he was twenty-two: he lost four seasons to war and another to illness. Had he started in his late teens – as he might well have done in the modern age of 'talent spotting' – or if he had not had to conform with the two-year qualification period – his figures would be even further ahead of all others'.

He used to chuckle over the fact that, in 1920, he finished top of the first-class bowling averages. When Surrey went to Edgbaston that year, Tom Rushby fell ill too late for a replacement to be brought up as opening bowler. So Jack Hobbs began their bowling opposite Bill Hitch – then the best pace bowler in England – took five of the first six Warwickshire wickets, and finished with five for 21. It was sound cricketing economy to reserve his strength for batting but for many years he could, if needed, bowl medium paced outswingers to good county standard.

In his first season with Surrey there was some criticism of his fielding. He himself explained this as partly due to the fact that, fielding in the deep, he soon threw his shoulder out and was in pain when called upon for a long return. Soon, however, he became as fine a cover point as any of his time: his pick-up and low throw were a single, smooth action and – often after lulling the batsman into confidence that there was a comfortable single to cover – he achieved many run outs. His accuracy when he needed to hit the stumps direct was marked but, if there was time, he preferred the safer method of returning to the wicket-keeper who, for years in Surrey and England sides, was his old friend Bert Strudwick. He always aimed at his chest and Struddy used to say 'If I hadn't caught the ball it would have broken my ribs: but although his throw was so hard, it was always dead on line.'

THE FIGURES OF MASTERY

For one so little concerned with records Jack Hobbs created a great number of them. But he might have set many more if he had been concerned to do so. Apart from the wish to complete 200 centuries – an objective much urged upon him by his admirers – he set little store by them. He made more runs (61,237) and more centuries (197) in all cricket, had a higher aggregate (3,636) and more hundreds (12) for England against Australia than anyone else: shared in the record number of century opening partnerships in Tests (24) including the two highest against Australia; – and in all cricket – 166: a record number of seven centuries before lunch. He and Tom Hayward put on over a hundred for the first wicket four times in a week: twice he scored centuries in each of four consecutive innings. He never suffered a 'pair of spectacles' (though he was put out – by Notts in 1907 – for 0 and 1) His 316

not out (made in less than seven hours) – v. Middlesex, 1926 – remains the highest innings ever played at Lord's; and his 266 not out (at Scarborough, 1925) the highest for either side in the history of Gentlemen v. Players matches. He frequently captained the Players against the Gentlemen and, at Old Trafford in 1926, when A. W. Carr was taken ill, he took over the captaincy of England against Australia.

In 1926, he and Wilfred Rhodes became the first professional cricketers to be co-opted on to a Test Selection Committee: he was made an honorary Life member of the Surrey Club in 1935 and of M.C.C. in 1949, while, in 1953, he became the first professional cricketer to receive a knighthood.

Over his entire career he averaged 50.65 but, significantly, 56.94 in Tests: and only once – 41.71 in 1907–08 – on his five Australian tours was his average lower than fifty. His career was one of steady success: he seemed to grow greater with the years: he scored 26,441 runs and 98 centuries after he was forty: averaged 82 in the 1928 season when he was 45; 61 in 1933, at fifty.

Of course there were the great days and the great periods – his first Test century (187 in 3½ hours) and the conquest of the South African googly bowlers in 1909–10: his superb resistance in Australia in 1920–21 and, with rising hope, in 1924–25 when he began with Herbert Sutcliffe the greatest opening partnership in all Test cricket – confirmed by the record books and in the nostalgic memory of every English cricket-follower of their era. Perhaps he was happiest of all with his century on his own familiar Oval which played a decisive part in England regaining The Ashes in 1926. In his last season – 1934 – he played only eighteen innings: rising fifty-two he was puzzled and sad to find his timing at fault: he felt he was hitting the ball hard but could not get it away. He was seeking to make a gentle exit when he received a letter from George Duckworth, who had chosen the Lancashire-Surrey match for his benefit match. Jack Hobbs was still a major crowd-attraction – and George wrote to press 'The Master' to appear. Jack could never resist such a request from an old friend (nor, at times, from strangers). He played: in the first innings he made 116 and in the second 51 not out. Once I asked him about that last century – 'Oh,' he said 'it was an awful innings.' I pressed him – it was reported as faultless. 'Well, that's true if it means I didn't give a chance; but, you see, I couldn't play the strokes: I couldn't

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run – I just stood and pulled them past mid-on for four.' Lancashire did not lightly submit to such treatment. They won the Championship in that season, but Hobbs gave Surrey the first innings lead with the only Championship century scored against Lancashire at Old Trafford in the entire summer.

His batting in that match has always seemed to me to epitomise Jack Hobbs. It was a remarkable example of mastery in – by sporting standards – old age: and it was prompted by generosity.

He enjoyed not only playing cricket, but being at a cricket match and in company of cricketers. He was never self-important enough to be bored when he was not batting. He was an inveterate, but not a cruel, practical joker. He would stand in the dressing-room looking out at the play and say 'My goodness, he's out – what a good ball' so convincingly as to send the 'next' batsman, who was not watching, dashing down the pavilion steps when no wicket had fallen. He would substitute water for gin-and-water in the ginger beer bottle Percy Chapman kept in his cricket bag and delighted to see the expression of horror on his captain's face as he took a surreptitious pull at it. Or, with a bow, he would hand back to a careless guest the wallet, petrol-lighter and cigarette-case he had unobtrusively lifted from unguarded pockets. And it was all done with a boyish air of fun.

THE MAN CALLED 'THE MASTER'

No study of Jack Hobbs the cricketer is complete without reference to Jack Hobbs the man, which reveals the major truth about his play – that it was a faithful projection of his character. His batting was rounded, mellow, free from vulgarity, violence or meanness, because he was a full man, thoughtful, modest, gentle and considerate.

It is important to realize of Jack Hobbs that, although cricket was to him a cherished profession, he never forgot that it was a game, never approached it with emotions too weighty for a game. He played to the best of his ability, but never with acrimony. He never truly disliked his opponents and he never thought that to be out was more than the ending of a single innings at a game – albeit the game which he esteemed as the finest of all.

Of little more than average height, slim, neatly and quietly dressed, he never asserted himself. His voice was low and soft

and it was the barometer of his shyness for, under social or nervous pressure, it sometimes broke into a flute-like note. But when he was at ease he talked well and the play of expression on his sensitive face was absorbing. He had a quizzical nose – not unduly long, though the cartoonists seized upon it as his one caricaturable feature – his eyes, according to his passport, were hazel, yet memory recalls them as having a slight greenish tinge; they were lively, quick to light with amusement, and set in a network of sun-and-laughter wrinkles.

He was a retiring person who regarded both broadcasting and public speaking as ordeals, to be avoided whenever possible. On the other hand, he was a meticulous correspondent. From the earliest days of his success, he received a heavy mail. Because he was the kind of man he was, and despite offers from friends to have them typed for him, he replied to every letter by hand. This for him was no easy matter: he wrote slowly and a little awkwardly and was more liable to writer's cramp than cricketer's. After the award of his knighthood he went on steadily replying to letters of congratulations daily for almost five months, and he even attempted to do so after his eightieth birthday. The most ponderous bore, the inkiest schoolboy asking for an autograph, received as courteous – if not as lengthy – response as an old friend.

It is important to realise that Jack Hobbs was an extremely moral man: but he was neither prig nor puritan: 'thou shalt not' was never part of his attitude. He was, indeed, somewhat embarrassed to find his scruples employed for propaganda purposes. He was a professing Christian, and a regular church – and chapel – goer. During his winter engagement with the Maharaj Kumar of Vizianagram in India, he objected to playing on Sundays and 'Vizzy' respected his wish. But he was never the bigotted Sabbatarian subsequent propaganda made him appear. He saw the decision as a personal one: other men might play cricket on Sundays if they wished: he did not. He never forbade his sons to do so, but he was pleased when they took the same attitude as his own.

He was not merely anxious to succeed as a cricketer, he was a highly conscientious professional. Therefore, in the early years, he neither smoked nor drank, lest his skill should be the least impaired. But again he was no bigot; nor a total abstainer. During

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his playing days he took an occasional glass of beer – for social reasons rather than enjoyment – and subsequently he became extremely fond of a brand of rather fat, expensive hand-made cigarettes and especially of a cigar after lunch, while he would enjoy a glass of hock. He came, too, to take much pleasure in a glass of champagne, at the best time for champagne – in the morning. A friend ringing up Jack at his shop during the morning would often be invited down to the cellar of the old Wellington restaurant to split a half-bottle of Veuve Cliquot and, until the last months of his life, there was always a bottle ready for a caller at his flat in Hove.

He opened his sports-goods shop in Fleet Street after the first World War; answered suggestion that its claims would impair his batting with centuries in each of Surrey's first two Championship matches of 1920, and ran it until the last year of his life. In business he was courteous and honest. Any village cricketer or schoolboy could ask him to select a bat and he would do so with genuine care. He believed in an honest profit, but no percentage was added because he was Jack Hobbs, and some bad debts were gently forgiven, if not forgotten.

To his friends he was utterly loyal. In 1953 'The Master's Club' was formed, with Jack as its permanent guest of honour. Its luncheons were held four or five times a year, but always the special occasion was his birthday, when the company included not only the members but as many as could still attend of those who had played with him for England. He accepted the idea of the club at first hesitantly but, later, with genuine pleasure. Indeed, it was he who broke the club rule of 'no speeches'. Quite unpressed, he stood up on one birthday and offered his thanks with an anecdote or reference to every one present, in a speech which became an annual event.

His family was the most important consideration in his life. In 1906 he was married to the Cambridge girl, Ada Gates, whom he had courted since he was seventeen, and he was a devoted husband for almost sixty years. He refused more than one overseas tour rather than leave her, and made one other only because she was permitted to accompany him – at his expense. He was much concerned for the welfare of his children – three sons and a daughter – and, greatly as he loved his life as a cricketer, he was only too well aware that, except for those of outstanding gifts, it

did not offer the rewards or the security he wanted for his sons. So, once he was satisfied that their playing ability, though adequate for them to enjoy club cricket, would not earn them a good living, he was at immense pains to start them on careers which would provide security for them.

His wife, Ada – Lady Hobbs – was extremely ill for some years before her death. The quality of tenderness in Jack Hobbs's character was never more apparent than in this care for her. He could well have afforded a nurse but feared that a 'stranger' in the household would destroy the ease and familiarity of their life. So, although he was then in his seventies, he nursed her himself with the thoroughness and care of a woman. He was, it seemed, deeply anxious that he should not die and leave her, ailing as she was, without him. When she died, in 1963 one felt that he considered his task was done. He carried his grief with dignity; but it was as if he allowed the machine to run down. His smile remained a gesture of affection even after he had lost the power of speech and he died peacefully on December 21 1963, five days after his eighty-first birthday.

There may be argument – though it cannot be strong – that there has ever been a better batsman than Jack Hobbs: it cannot be argued that any cricketer was better-loved.

FOUR

Walter Hammond

by J. M. Kilburn

W. R. HAMMOND, standing among the highest in cricket, knew the loneliness of greatness.

There was no conceit in him, no boastfulness. He could not escape awareness of his own superiorities but he never emphasised them by comparisons. He accepted his talent for what it was and the talents of other cricketers for what they were. Circumstances and his nature induced him to look after his own interests and he assumed the same capacity in others. In captaincy, in play, he conceded individual rights of self-expression, maintaining that cricketers selected to play should be good enough to know how to play and to discern the policy required by situations.

Hammond knew what was expected of him and pre-supposed the same knowledge in companions. Events proved him wrong. Hammond was not first among equals, as he imagined. He was considered by his contemporaries as of different composition, of finer clay and mould. The subjects of his kingdom, conceding a divine right of kings, sought some leadership of divinity and in its absence felt neglected and confused.

Hammond was not a selfish or a thoughtless cricketer. He was a self-centred cricketer because his talent made him so and the course of his career compelled him to isolation. In his later playing years he was captain of his county and his country because he was the champion cricketer of his county and country. His stature was simply not comparable with that of his companions in the field and they, with public opinion, looked up with awe rather than understanding.

The young Hammond, the conquering Hammond, the enthroned Hammond all knew a sense of difference, an atmosphere of isolation. The son of a soldier, Walter Hammond became fatherless at the age of 15 after most of his childhood years had been spent in the military barracks of Malta. Hammond at school in Cirencester, with no firmly-rooted home life, was constrained to self-dependence and Hammond after school met such frustrations that even the most extrovert of natures, which his was not, would have been turned towards self-consideration.

Hammond's academic achievements at Cirencester Grammar School were undistinguished but he found sporting success and satisfaction. He was good at all games and so dramatically good

at one that he played an innings of 365 in a house match.

He stayed at school until he was 17 years old with little idea in his mind of a future career and cricket claimed him without initiative on his part. He played three games for Gloucestershire in 1920 and was offered a professional engagement for 1921.

In this season Hammond's ground staff duties included attachment to Clifton College, as assistant to John Tunncliffe, the school coach. Tunncliffe, member of an immortal Yorkshire opening partnership, was poacher turned gamekeeper in batting. He began as a big hitter and disciplined himself to the sobrieties of orthodox defence. He instructed, in his native county and at Clifton, from the later wisdom. Hammond at the age of 18 and uncommonly gifted in 'putting the bat to the ball' was not likely to relish all he must have been told but at least he found a fellow-spirit in slip-fielding enterprise and principles. Tunncliffe and Hammond were outstanding artists of their different days in the slips, the younger following the older in exceptional powers of anticipation and catching assurance with either hand.

In his second year as a professional cricketer Hammond met severe disappointment. As a 19-year-old youth he was beginning to find his feet in a man's world of the county championship when he was declared ineligible to play. Hammond was born in Dover and needed a two-year residential qualification to represent Gloucestershire. His mother was living in Sussex, school attendance at Cirencester was specifically excluded and holidays spent mainly on the Neale's farm at Berkeley were pleaded in vain.

In the calm of distant survey Gloucestershire can be seen as administratively careless; Lord Harris, who insisted on a formal inquiry, can be appreciated more in principle more than in practice and M.C.C. can be acknowledged as rigorously law-abiding. Hammond, the hapless victim, can be understood in his frustration.

He swallowed disappointment and waited. Through the remaining summer of 1922 he played club cricket and watched county cricket and thought about cricket and forged an armour of self-sufficiency against slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, current and future.

In 1923 he appeared again, in Gloucestershire's opening match of the season. He was sent in first and he scored 110. He reached an aggregate of 1,421 in the year and was talked about in the dressing-rooms. After 1924 and 1925 he was talked about through

the whole world of cricket because of two innings he had played. In one, against Middlesex at Bristol, he scored 174; in the other, against Lancashire at Old Trafford, 250 not out. The imperial Hammond had been glimpsed; the palace doors were opening; the crown jewels were being arrayed.

Before the throne could be occupied Hammond fell again into the clutch of circumstance. A tour of the West Indies in the early months of 1926 brought a ripening of talent preceding a desperate illness. Fearful fever covered the homeward journey and Hammond's summer was spent mainly in hospital and convalescent home. He could not play a single innings in first-class cricket; he was a cricketer obscured if not forgotten and he was a young man with ample time to turn thoughts inwards. Through his illness and recovery he had visitors and faith-restoring friends, but Hammond the introvert was much alone.

He came back to cricketing health through a quiet coaching engagement in South Africa and strode into the English May of 1927 not so much a man among men as a prince among commoners. Gloucestershire met Yorkshire in their opening match and Hammond scored 27 and 135. He made two separate centuries at the Oval and passed, by way of the return match against Yorkshire, to Old Trafford and one of cricket's great glories.

Hammond made 99 in the first innings against Lancashire and left little memory of it. This was an innings, indistinguishable from a thousand others. On the third morning he batted again to create not an innings but a magnificence, to raise not an act of cricketing defiance but a monument to majesty.

Lancashire were at such advantage that, so the story runs, they had made tentative arrangements for the disposal of a free afternoon. Their intention was victory completed by lunch time. E. A. McDonald bowled the first over of the morning and was driven five times to the boundary by Hammond.

The driving continued, varied periodically by square cut and hook. In little more than three hours Hammond scored 187, hitting four sixes and 24 fours. Old Trafford stood transfixed, breath caught, eyes dazzled. Had Hammond never played another innings he would in that morning of magic have passed from promise to fulfilment.

He did, of course, play other innings. He played them in 1927 to reach his 1,000 runs in the month of May and he went on play-

ing them to the end of his career as the greatest individual batting attraction, save Bradman only, in his world of cricket. Like Hobbs and Grace before him, he could be measured in gate money.

Hammond's selection for the 1928-29 tour of Australia was a formality, but the magnitude of his success was beyond all prognostication. He toured at the height of his powers and he disciplined the powers to the peak of achievement. In the five Test matches he totalled 905 runs, which included scores of 251 at Sydney, 200 at Melbourne and 119 not out and 177 at Adelaide. Hammond went to Australia as a member of a powerful batting side containing names more elevated than his own. He returned an international figure, caught inescapably in the privileges and penalties of fame.

He never recovered, or relapsed, from the experience. He stayed Hammond the Great, Hammond of England; he also stayed Hammond the Isolated.

Hammond's privileges and perquisites were not begrudged him any more than his foibles were taken as personally offensive. His idiosyncrasies were as natural and inevitable a part of him as brown eyes, wavy hair or a taste for brown suits of expensive tailoring. Fast motor cars, skilfully handled, or extravagant winnings and losings in a poker school seemed as right for him as they would have been out of character in lesser mortals. He was in some ways an odd and unsatisfactory associate in the dressing rooms and on tour, but he was unpretentious; undemanding as well as unresponsive. He courted neither popularity nor controversy. He assumed, if he ever considered the matter, that his actions and reactions would be understood because they seemed simple enough to him. Some days he was cheerful; some days he was not.

When Hammond accepted the responsibilities of leadership he was aware of them. His failure – a failure in the sense that he will not be ranked among the great captains – was not of endeavour but of conception. His own independence prevented his appreciation of the dependence in others.

On the field he was inclined to be fatalistic. He made few tactical errors but he lacked the warmth to inspire. He was accused of 'letting the game go on' and of watching it in detachment. His authority was by his own enormous playing skill and prestige, not by any gifts in the range of human relationships. He followed the

conventions, making the required speeches and public appearances with adequate grace and unfailing dignity, but he was not prepared to 'sell himself' through the false heartiness and eternal availability apparently demanded of high office.

Hammond simply could not understand how much his public and the players of his teams looked up to him. He never looked up to himself or had need to look up to other cricketers to such extent.

The admiration Hammond created derived from the adolescent stage in his cricket career when the magical colouring was revealed in an innings here and there; when Hammond's figure was coltish and eye and hand were alternately finding and losing the full co-ordination that is cemented by experience. The Hammond of 20 had the makings but not the maturity of greatness. His 174 not out against Middlesex at Bristol in 1924, his 250 not out against Lancashire at Old Trafford in 1925 and his 238 not out in the West Indies were

'Daffodils that come before the swallow dares.'

His 1,000 runs in the May of 1927 gave confirmation of summer warmth and sunshine. From the time of that achievement there was no doubting the Hammond authority. Subsequent failures and successes were measured in degrees of majesty. A Hammond century was adornment to any occasion; a Hammond duck was an offence against cricketing nature.

Match by match, season by season, his splendour glowed and grew. After an English aggregate of 2,969 in 1928 he made 1,553 runs in 13 matches in Australia. He parcelled them in bulky packages and his major Test innings were significant in their context, match-winning contributions not collections for the sake of collecting. Hammond made himself a part, the greatest part, of the most powerful batting ever to represent England in Australia. The lowest England total of the series was 257 and this comparative failure of a tiring and depleted team cost them the match. Their consolation was a rubber already won.

On this tour Hammond mastered not only bowling but circumstances. He entered Australia as a batsman of rare brilliance; he left as a fully-disciplined Test match player. He adapted himself to the needs of waiting for due and just rewards. His off-driving was already world-famous and was obviously to be met by defensive field settings. Hammond accepted the limitations

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but maintained the glory of his driving. Half his magnificent shots counted singles or nothing in the scorebook, but periodically the fieldsmen were left helpless and always they were made aware of power behind beauty. Hammond employed power and beauty as capital assets and waited for the dividends to accumulate for eventual distribution.

To score his 251 in the Sydney Test he stayed at the wicket for over seven-and-a-half hours, scorching the covers with 30 boundaries but even more impressively implying that bowlers would exhaust themselves before he did, that he would not weary in the well-doing of batting for England.

In this and the remaining years of his twenties Hammond was at the peak of superb physical prowess. There seemed no limit to his endurance, no flaw in his grace. The appearance as well as the strength of full manhood had come to him and he wore his flannels like robes of state.

Of rather more than middle height he was beautifully proportioned in the athletic mould. His stance at the wicket was orthodox and easy and his strokes, for all their strength and aggression, were never flamboyant. The gift of exceptional co-ordination gave him time to meet the ball apparently at leisure. He was rarely off balance, rarely caught in confusion of footwork and even more rarely discovered in any attitude of inelegance.

The casual impression of Hammond at the wicket was of a batsman standing upright and hitting the ball away much as it came. Careful observation disclosed a much more sophisticated and concentrated art. Hammond moved back and forth and across the wicket with such fluency that the extent of his travel tended to be overlooked. Slow bowlers found themselves being countered, even defensively, yards down the pitch. Faster bowlers found their range of containment curtailed because Hammond could be as fierce from the back foot as from the front.

He was essentially an attacking batsman, as all the very greatest have been attacking batsmen. His inclination and intention was to destroy bowling, to reduce it to acknowledged subservience, to make batting easy for himself. Experience taught him, as it taught the generations from Grace to Bradman, that conquest involves the element of time. To give himself time and scope Hammond accepted discrimination and discipline.

He played in context; the achievement of an hour in a festival

might require two hours in the sterner conditions of the county championship, three hours against bowling and fielding of Test match calibre. Without sacrificing principles Hammond compromised with practical necessity. He became pragmatic. The cover drive cut off was not a frustration but an exercise, an inquiry into the possibilities of business.

The big innings of his early days were accidental in the sense that they were extensions of smaller innings, composed in the same key. He made 200 or 20 according to the fates of the day. His 32 at Lord's was of the same construction as his 187 at Old Trafford.

During the tour of 1928-29 and ever afterwards Hammond reduced the odds against himself. He set a regulator on the flaring flame of his immense ability. He could hook, but he rarely did; he could play the leg-glance, but he rarely did. Profit, he reasoned, lay in presenting the full face of the bat as often as possible. In on-drive, straight drive and cover drive the full face was presented; in restraint the simple back or forward defensive stroke sufficed.

When eye was keenest and co-ordination sweetest Hammond displayed astonishingly delicate touch. For the long hop down the leg side he devised a steering stroke to fine leg with a horizontal bat - an admonition rather than a punishment for the erring bowler. At Adelaide in net practice he dumbfounded Bowes, Larwood and Voce by asking them to bowl normally and excuse the impudence of deflections towards third man and fine leg, played off the front foot. The exhibition was not arrogance, but Hammond's practice for his 'eye'.

The improvisations in Hammond's batting were superfluous. His strength and his glory lay in the drive. He played it through the arc from mid-on to point and it was as thrilling to behold as it was perilous to intercept. From the front foot it frightened bowlers in their follow-through and left cover fieldsmen wringing hands or standing transfixed. At Old Trafford in 1936 he scored 167 in three hours against All-India and was paid the compliment of four off-side fieldsmen applauding their own discomfiture as the ball sped between them to the boundary. 'It was' said the Indian captain, 'a privilege to be present on the field.'

The beauty of batting is to be understood only in the instant of creation. It can be remembered and recaptured only in part. The butterfly pinned in the show-case conveys colour and form but not the magic of flight among flowers in the garden. No de-

scription can match the breath-caught moment of silence before applause for wonder seen and felt. First-hand knowledge of Hammond's off-drive was a cricketing experience beyond reconstruction. Only those who saw can know, but by happy chance the show-case offers an evocation.

During a Sydney innings a camera shutter was opened at the precise moment to give a still photograph enduring life. The ball has gone out of the picture, somewhere to the left of cover point. Hammond is following its course with his eyes, but head and shoulders remain as they were when it was struck. Arms have completed the follow-through, hands to head height; the bat is still firmly gripped low on the handle. (*facing page 89*)

These features are static and could have been posed, but life vibrates in the rest of the picture. Muscles of the back have rippled to create the rippling of the shirt. The left foot, a full yard from the popping crease and far across to the off, carries the whole weight of the body in perfect poise, heel raised, foundation light but sure. The right leg, bent but not stretched to straining point, leaves the foot behind, toe just on or inside the crease. The balance is exact, the grace is infinite. Even idiosyncrasy is illustrated by the dark handkerchief peeping from the trousers pocket. No more truthful or inspiring representation of an athlete in action has yet been made.

No more suitable subject for illustration of an athlete in action could have been chosen than Walter Hammond in his heyday. He began with gifts and he invested with appreciation. To his natural sense of balance, to his strength of limb, to his keenness of eye he added a ready interpretation of technique. Hammond would have been accomplished in any undertaking that requires co-ordination and rhythm. In the minor pre-occupations within his sphere he always exhibited a touch of distinction; dancing, driving a car, playing other games, came easily to him. Given opportunity and inclination he could have been first-class in golf or tennis; briefly he was a professional footballer; after an hour of experiment he could ride Pacific breakers on a surf-board; in the deck games of an ocean liner he proved almost impossible to handicap out of conquest. Hammond scarcely knew how to look like a novice in any form of sport.

In the game he adorned he was vastly more than a batsman. For a time, when the muscles responded and energy seemed in-

exhaustible he was a bowler, right-handed at medium pace, with an action of classical mould. Characteristically he made bowling look effortless, but vigour imparted the lively haste from the pitch that brought more than one enviable analysis at both county and Test match level. Hammond, like Hobbs, could have made a living as a bowler had he not followed destiny to rule the kingdom of batting.

Hammond in the field was as significant and as awesome as Hammond at the wicket. Logic and perhaps personal preference would have led him into the covers, but necessity directed him into the slips as amenuensis for Gloucestershire's Parker and as creative partner for any England bowler who found the outside edge of the bat.

Hammond at slip became charged with the authority and splendour of Hammond at the crease. The same qualities of accomplishment were displayed and the same astonishing degree of achievement followed. He amazed the players as he thrilled the spectators.

His slip fielding was less the art of the acrobat than of the juggler. He expressed rhythm more than explosion of energy and he was spectacular only in retrospect. In action he seemed to be choosing his own time.

He rarely dived to his catches. There are few pictures in memory of Hammond full-length on the grass, arm outstretched, the ball grasped in desperate fingers. There can be few recollections of Hammond leaping, arms and legs outspread, of Hammond tumbling, of Hammond rolling over and over holding the prize aloft.

For the vast majority of his catches an inborn sense of balance kept him on his feet, anticipation and a liquid flow of movement carried him undramatically into the required position. How far he moved, how wide his range of activity, could be vouched for by the second slips who found their own misjudgments covered and by defeated wicketkeepers who found missed chances to be catches after all and byes conceded to be byes unrealised.

Hammond was not in fair competition with most of his contemporaries in the slips. He began with advantages of superior speed of sight and judgment and with the greater mobility of harmonized physique. Some catches by Hammond, taken without apparent difficulty, would simply not have been catches for other fieldsmen. Again, as in his batting, he was accepted, with apprecia-

tion rather than envy, as on a different plane of accomplishment.

Hammond's exceptional talent in slip-fielding was based on awareness of his own range and assurance in his own capacity. He fielded confidently, not hopefully. He rarely thrust out a speculative hand or leaped in mere optimism. His range was so enormous because he moved instinctively and because his timing was precise. He had full confidence in one hand where attempt with two would have involved loss of balance and awkwardness of movement.

Slip fielding is not normally the most dignified of the cricketing arts. Readiness involves crouch and angularity. Much of the activity is reflex and therefore uncontrolled; reactions tend to be in the form of snatching and clutching and diving and tumbling and thudding to earth. Hammond lost dignity as rarely as he lost his cap. He never crouched; he poised himself.

Stained knees to his flannels, dust on his shirt were scarcely ever to be seen because he scarcely ever overbalanced. Yet catches innumerable were held inches from the grass in swoop that carried Hammond behind second slip or behind the wicketkeeper before he straightened up to toss the ball quietly to some nearby colleague.

Hammond was an undemonstrative cricketer. He must have known delight in some, at least, of his more miraculous achievements but to throw the ball sky-high after completion of a catch would have been as much out of character as any exhibition of disappointment in a failure.

He had feelings, but they were kept for private expression, not public display on the cricket field. He was moody, ranging through glum silence to jovial companionship, but he was not excitable either in pleasure or distress. He was not so much indifferent to opinions about him as unwilling to volunteer the sources of his own emotion.

Sometimes his anger over injustice towards others could be discerned from his actions. Sometimes the cruelties of fate towards himself could be reflected in an attitude. At Melbourne when England were playing Australia in 1947 W. J. Edrich was given l.b.w. against probability and Compton also suffered from an unexpected verdict. Hammond, England's captain, came from the dressing-room with thunder on his brow. His first boundary was an explosion of temper in unnecessary force of striking; he could

have put the same ball away to the same place with half the effort and twice the certainty. He drove again, fiercely and low, but still emotionally and was caught and bowled, probably to the surprise and certainly to the relief of the bowler.

Hammond offered no comment with expression of disgust or petulant swing of the bat. To all appearances on his homeward walk anger had evaporated and fatalistic acceptance of the facts had been assumed.

Much the same resignation was suggested in his departure from the field at Headingley when England were playing Australia in 1934. In that season Hammond scored 2,366 runs with an average of 76. The five Tests yielded him an aggregate of 162 from eight innings.

For Gloucestershire he made runs with regularity and brilliance. In 13 championship appearances he collected eight centuries, one of them exceeding 300 and three others exceeding 200. In the Tests his highest score was 43.

Only once did he promise the best of himself against Australia. At Headingley in the fourth Test, with England far behind on first innings, Hammond touched the splendour of his general form. Four masterful boundaries came in his first 20 runs and the cloak of authority was unmistakably on his shoulders. England expected and promise was on the verge of fulfilment.

Hammond played Grimmett unconcernedly towards mid-on and was clearly not considering a single when he found his batting partner, C. F. Walters, scampering towards him. In the flow of his stroke Hammond had moved a yard or two down the pitch. Walters, utterly committed, was beyond the point of no return and Hammond accepted the inevitable, completed the crossing and walked on towards the pavilion amid a silence of cricketing tragedy. Any expression, even of Australian satisfaction and relief, would have been sinful as blasphemy.

Hammond's Test match failures of 1934 made cricket mystery and cricket conversation at the time without in any way diminishing his standing among cricketers. Only the ignorant or local patriots in blinkers called for his head. No England team was conceivable without him, nobody suggested unreason in another invitation to tour Australia in 1936-37. His appointment to the England captaincy was not a controversial cricketing issue when the appointment was made possible in the light of the times by

change from Hammond W. R. to W. R. Hammond. Hammond nominally professional player or amateur was equally Hammond the cricketer.

Change from one status to another brought no discernible change in his own cricket or cricketing demeanour. As a professional he earned and received favourable terms; as an amateur he advanced his personal prospects. As a cricketer he remained in the isolation of his talent and character.

Change in detail came with the calendar and its consequences. Hammond holding wider choice missed a match here and there, suffering at one time from throat infection and increasingly from a troublesome back. The middle years thickened the lissome figure, though without disturbing delicacy of balance or the lightness of step. He gradually reduced his interests to batting and slip-fielding, with his unselfconscious walk from one end of the pitch to the other still among the minor delights of cricket for spectators of the time.

The middle years formed the period of persistent accumulation and unquestioned authority. Gloucestershire claimed with pride, England with thankfulness, but Hammond became more than of Gloucestershire and England. In all cricket rating he was simply – Hammond.

For Gloucestershire and for England he was part of a team yet, in a sense, representing something extra-mural. He served a general and, additionally, a special purpose, like a rare first-edition in a library; one book among other books, but separate as a show-piece and specified in the insurance cover.

Gloucestershire in Hammond's time were never the county champions, but they were as likely as any side to outshine the current and prospective leaders. They were also a team looked upon with favour by professionals of other counties taking Benefit matches. Hammond's presence or absence, his fitness and his form, exerted a financial influence.

He was wanted for every possible match – in the championship, in Tests, in Festivals, on tours. Had he so chosen and had even his immense physical capacity so permitted he could probably have been playing cricket or travelling to and from cricket through every week of every year.

He undertook his share, if not more than his share. He was in the West Indies in 1925–26 and in 1934–35. He was in South

Africa (apart from coaching engagement) in 1927-28, in 1930-31 and in 1938-39. He was in Australia and New Zealand in 1928-29, in 1932-33, in 1936-37 and in 1946-47.

In all he played 140 Test innings in 85 matches, scoring 7,249 runs. All opponents conceded him at least one century and for good measure he took 83 wickets and held 110 catches. As a captain Hammond once defended the selection of an inconsistent batsman by insisting that he was 'good in the bits and pieces'. Hammond's own 'bits and pieces' would have been a justification in themselves, without his batting.

Periodically, in the full years, Hammond reduced himself almost to 'bread and butter' cricket. However he played he could not make himself anonymous but every now and then, for a week or two at a time, he would appear to lapse into run-getting by routine. He batted, as it were, by habit and from memory.

Bowlers, the very best of them, learned not to be deceived into complacency. Damped fires were never extinguished fires and for no apparent reason beyond Hammond's personal inclination the flames would flare again. Seeming staleness was consumed within them, the joy of creative batsmanship leaped from the ashes.

So Hammond made his 231 in four hours or so against Derbyshire towards the end of 1933, so he took 252 gorgeous runs at Leicester in 1935, so came 317, with three sixes and 34 fours, against Nottinghamshire at Gloucester in 1936.

England asked more of Hammond than big scores contributing to big totals. From him they expected decisive dissipation of danger, a scattering of enemy forces and once, at least, they asked for elimination of anxiety before it could be concentrated. In Jardine's tour of 1932-33 the Australians were placing high hopes in an unorthodox left-hand spin bowler named Fleetwood-Smith and as preliminary to the Tests the touring team, in council of war, resolved upon an effort to dispose of a potential menace.

In the November match against Victoria Hammond was deputed to deal with Fleetwood-Smith. Going in after three wickets had been lost cheaply he made careful examination of the subject in mind and in due course found himself with a century to his name, the M.C.C. innings thoroughly established and Fleetwood-Smith adequately investigated. During the next hour or so Hammond took his personal score to 203, reduced Fleetwood-Smith's analysis to two for 124 in 25 overs and convinced Australian selectors that

the bowler's Test career should be delayed for at least another season.

In an earlier tour Hammond saw the historic bad-wicket batting of Hobbs and Sutcliffe at Melbourne and was deliberately shielded from possible experience by a shrewd change in the batting order. When the pitch was at its worst Hobbs sent a message to the dressing-room suggesting that if a wicket fell Jardine, not Hammond, should come next to the crease.

A wicket did not, in fact, fall until the greatest of opening partnerships had carried the total yet again past 100. Incredible batting skill and thoughtful tactics won a match, but Hammond was not excused first-hand evidence of Melbourne misbehaviour. He waited eight years.

Then, with Leyland as partner, he came to full realisation of all that Hobbs and Sutcliffe had achieved. This time the outcome was less significant. Hammond and Leyland could not turn looming defeat into ultimate victory, but they added 42 runs by miracles of resource in skill and concentration and were dismissed only by diving catches of equal unreason.

By the nature of his batting Hammond's splendour was most readily displayed on a trustworthy pitch, but at Melbourne and at Brisbane in 1946, as on innumerable less publicised occasions, he proved his technique and his temperament in the worst of conditions. He revelled in sunshine but he had a bank account set aside for rainy days.

Hammond in the last years before the Second Great Interruption lost little in power and mobility but added a stateliness to the fascinating grace. He never looked an ageing cricketer but more and more he appeared a senior one, an institution whose dismissal before lunch or near close of play was a treasurer's concern. Bowlers, particularly slow bowlers, begin to rate their successes not by taking his wicket but by passing his bat. They felt themselves living with a legend.

The last of his immortal innings was constructed entirely in the character of England's leading and lordly cricketer. It was played at Lord's for England against Australia when Hammond was 35 years old, captain of his side.

Having won the toss England lost two wickets for 20 runs and had lost three for 31 to McCormick's lively fast bowling before Hammond and Paynter, the courageous Lancashire left-hander,

came into partnership. In the June sunshine Hammond epitomised himself at his most majestic. He played watchful defensive strokes, utterly at ease; he drove, through the covers and straight to the pavilion rails, with breathcatching power, but no suggestion of emotion or desperation.

He stroked the ball away for singles, dismissed it for boundaries. Never once, morning, afternoon or evening, was he manifestly in hurry, in difficulty or in uncertainty. Only once were the Australians offered hope or prospect of his dismissal and when Chipperfield, driven straight and ankle-high, put out an interrogatory hand the ball not only fractured his finger but continued its course to rebound yards into the field from the foot of the pavilion rails. If Chipperfield ever blamed himself for missing a catch he must be entirely alone in condemnation.

By close of play Hammond's score was 210 and the day was completely and for ever his own. Those who saw, whatever their loyalties, whatever their critical standards, whatever their conception of batsmanship, were wholly satisfied. Hammond had presented his art, summarised and illustrated in unfading colour.

He added another 30 runs of equal quality – the highest – on the second morning and, finally restricted by an elbow injury and a strained thigh muscle, was clean bowled in dignity after hitting 32 boundaries in his 240. Neither Hammond nor any other cricketer ever played an innings more impressive or more precisely appropriate to the occasion. Lord's in fine weather of June; a Test match; Hammond batting at his best. 'Earth has not anything to show more fair' – to cricketers.

Counting this innings as peak of achievement there was no sudden descent to the plains in Hammond's career. Under his captaincy England shared the rubber of 1938, won the rubber of 1938-39 in South Africa, where Hammond scored three Test centuries, and defeated the West Indies in the uneasy summer of 1939 during which the statisticians remarked on his 100th Test match catch. His last innings before the outbreak of war was a century against Nottinghamshire, his last contribution to the score-books of August was catches for Goddard.

War service took Hammond to Egypt and to South Africa. He played a little improvised cricket and a little more at Lord's when he was posted back to England in 1943. In the Victory 'Tests' of 1945 he indicated glory undiminished and activity scarcely re-

duced. In 1946 he was beyond competition for leadership of the expedition to Australia.

This was a tour of enthusiastic preparation and immense goodwill but it was a tour of disastrous outcome for England and of sunset for Hammond. England were dubious of the undertaking, pleading uncertain resources, but they readily accepted obligations. The fuel, they felt, might be of questionable quality but the bellows of public desire were forcing a fierce flame of cricket interest.

England knew that they were not ready to meet Australia but they packed their bags optimistically. They had a new bowler in Bedser and a well-remembered one in Voce. Hutton and Compton were batsmen fit to set before the world. And there was Hammond. The team was unbalanced in resources and quality – but there was Hammond.

History proved that there was not Hammond. Week by week as the tour proceeded there was less and less of Hammond. Form failed him when he most desired it; fortune turned against him when fortune's help was needed. All the advantages of weather, the run of the game, the imponderables, went to the stronger Australian side until Australians themselves wished better luck to the weaker.

Hammond in the Tests was dismissed early and not always by obvious bowling conquest. His brief magnificence on the fearsome pitch at Brisbane was meaningless in the context of the rubber. At no time could he take charge of a match to rule with orb and sceptre.

Gradually he retreated into self-protection against the slings and arrows. He detached himself and detachment began to look like indifference. He tried, without knowing how or why, to accommodate himself to new demands in public relations and he floundered in alien country.

He was not at ease in a brash world of newspaper and radio confrontation and the more he saw of it the less he liked or understood it. He made the common mistake of generalisation from the particular, assuming one vulgarity to be a trade-mark, aggressive ignorance a tribal badge. Hammond required a personal privacy and under threat of its denial he withdrew from contact. Withdrawal irritated those who insist that holders of public office are not entitled to any private life or privileges and it cost him some sympathy in those with wider understanding.

Public comment turned against Hammond's leadership in his last tour of Australia, but cricketing goodwill never turned against him or his outclassed team. Australians positively hoped for a late England success. Australians would have rejoiced in a farewell with banners flying, a final draught of vintage Hammond.

Hammond, too, must have hoped and resolved. His heart was never worn on his sleeve, his intentions and ambitions were never advanced in prophetic word, but he had a sense of the fitness of things and he had a cricketing pride. The rubber lost, the tour a playing downfall for England, the last Test at Sydney could yet offer opportunity for a closing splendour, a thanks for the memories.

Hammond suffered a crippling fibrositis; he could not play. He was denied his curtain call.

He did play a farewell Test innings in New Zealand. In a rain-ruined game at Christchurch he was given an ovation from dressing-room to crease and he responded with a 79 of beautiful driving and confident placing of singles. During the one New Zealand innings he also made his final slip catch, characteristically swift and right-handed from fast-medium bowling.

Perhaps the end was a proper rounding after all. Hammond's cricket passed in graciousness if not in glamour, as so much of it had been played in the quieter fields of England's West Country. Hammond made some of his most glorious hundreds after strolling to the crease from a deck chair. He was a rural cricketer as well as a commercial cricketer; his splendour touched the meadows as it filled a stadium.

Cheltenham spectators, huddling on the backless forms or sprawling on the grass of the College ground, could have savoured all Hammond's talent and cricketing expression in one delirious 'Week'. In the successive fixtures played there in 1928 he presented everything within his youthful capacity.

In the first match Gloucestershire met Surrey. Hammond scored 139 and 143 and held 10 catches. The second visitors were Worcestershire, who took first innings on a cloudy morning of high humidity. Hammond helped himself to nine wickets for 23 runs in due appreciation for ideal swing bowling conditions. The other Worcestershire wicket was taken by Parker - caught Hammond.

Cloud cleared; the sun warmed earth and spirit. Hammond

contributed 80 to Gloucestershire's total of 370 for six and then – sufficiently rested – bowled unchanged throughout the second Worcestershire innings to take another six wickets.

Wherever he was, whatever he was doing, he looked the part. He disappointed his admirers and, no doubt, himself by specific failures but, then, once he had been seen or anticipated, his every failure was a disappointment, untimely clouding of a sunny day. So much was missed with Hammond gone; so much came to be expected of him that mere competence seemed a dereliction of duty.

The fierce light that beats upon a throne casts shadow as contrast to illumination and Hammond in cricket had to learn to live with publicity as comfortably as he could, to accept its probing as well as its reflection. He could rarely enjoy an undemanding minor role.

When weariness finally fell upon him he left cricket by his own decision. He gave formal and public announcement of his retirement from Test cricket during the 1946–47 tour of Australia. He made no apologies, indicated no regrets. Although he had not said so, his departure from the Test match scene was virtually departure from all first-class cricket. He had no contract to break, no obligations to fulfil. To all intents and purposes he simply ceased to play, though he was persuaded to make one more appearance for Gloucestershire in their August Bank Holiday match of 1951. It was a concession to nostalgia, a sentimental journey to the wicket, a contribution to the county coffers.

Hammond had already left his material in the record books for historians to ponder and to treasure. Among huge scores, monumental aggregates and averages, outstanding achievements, his name catches the eye on page after page.

Between 1920 and 1947 he scored over 50,000 runs at an average of 56.

He made 165 centuries, four of them exceeding 300 and 32 others exceeding 200.

His highest score was 336 not out, against New Zealand at Auckland in 1933. In this innings, occupying little more than five hours, he hit 10 sixes and 33 fours.

He made two separate centuries in a match seven times.

His aggregate exceeded 3,000 in the seasons of 1933, 1937 and 1938.

In every season from 1927 to 1939, with the exception of 1931, he scored more than 2,000 runs.

In 1934, a year of illogical Test match failure for him, his overall average was 76.32. It was 75.27 in 1938, when he made 15 centuries in 42 innings. In 1946, the first year of full resumption after war, he played 26 innings to average 84.90.

He made over 1,000 runs on his Australian tours of 1928-29 and 1936-37 and on his South African tours of 1930-31 and 1938-39.

He scored 1,042 runs during the month of May in 1927, 1,060 runs during August in 1933 and 1,281 in the August of 1936.

For eight consecutive seasons, from 1933 to 1946, he was leading batsman in the English averages.

He took 818 catches, 78 of them in the season of 1928, 65 in 1925, 54 in both 1933 and 1935.

These are some of the statistics, wonderful in themselves. They are evidence of achievement. The legend of accomplishment, vivid in Hammond's lifetime, imperishable in cricket memory, is based on cumulative impression and observation of a cricketer who personified all the classical conception of the game. Hammond introduced no novelty of technique, raised no iconoclastic problem, spurred no cricket revolution.

He expressed himself within the framework of the game as he found it and enlarged its scope by the magnificence of manner. His portrayal of cricket was the thing of beauty that is joy for ever and abundance lay about him from seed time to harvest. Grandeur was his cloak and gratitude for it must be his memorial.

FIVE

Don Bradman

by Bill Bowes

ONE OF THE most frustrating questions a cricketer can be asked is 'Who was the best batsman of all time?' It is a question which cannot be answered satisfactorily because great reputations are made in attack and defence. There is all-round ability to be taken into consideration, too, besides the strength and weakness of the opposition.

In a cricket sense the query can be simplified, but still there can be complications. For instance, supposing I asked a much simpler question of you: 'Which batsman served the England cause better during the Australian tour of 1965-6, Barrington, with his most reliable contributions, or Barber with his brilliant aggression?' What would you answer?

Would you point out that it wasn't fair to compare an opening batsman with a No. 3 or No. 4, that Barber's real worth was in the moral effect of his onslaughts. Certainly no two opinions would be exactly alike and, viewed over one match or one tour, it is quite possible that the better player can be overshadowed. It is easier to take a completed career.

The true measure of a batsman is his ability to score runs, lots of runs, regularly and consistently, on hard wickets or soft, against fast bowlers or slow, with or against the clock, and particularly, too, against bowlers who are content to limit his scoring rather than try to get him out.

On all these counts there is one batsman who stands head and shoulders above the rest, Don Bradman. Without any hesitation he can be called the best batsman of all time and there are all the records and statistics in the world to prove it.

Dr W. G. Grace, considering the pitches on which he played, was obviously a great batsman. His prowess kept ahead of the developing skills of the bowlers. His performances shadowed every other batsman of his time and he scored runs, lots of runs, at a period in cricket when overarm bowling developed from underarm or under the shoulder type of delivery. In the main this development meant that bowlers were able to do everything they did before but at greater speed and with higher bounce.

Then came Jack Hobbs. As bowlers specialised in their particular craft, swing, spin, pace variations, flight, the googly, he met and mastered the lot. Pitches were much better in his time but

they were not protected against rain and on 'sticky' wickets he was still an acknowledged master. At the Oval where the ball flew about alarmingly after rain he still produced big scores.

W. G. Grace in his career scored 54,896 runs – which included 126 centuries – at an average of just under 40 an innings. Sir Jack Hobbs in a career which spanned 29 years scored more runs than any other cricketer, hit 197 centuries, and his grand aggregate of 61,237 runs came at an average of just over 50 an innings. They are impressive figures but they pale when compared with Bradman's.

His career slightly overlapped that of Hobbs, but, whereas Bradman entered the arena with all the proud confidence of youth, Hobbs was now in the evening of his career with years of experience replacing his earlier enthusiasm.

It would be unfair to compare the two players on this showing. Perhaps the point of comparison can be suitably found in the fact that Bradman's career overlapped those of Frank Woolley, Patsy Hendren, Phil Mead, Wally Hammond and Herbert Sutcliffe at one end – all players who challenged the supremacy of Hobbs – and, at the other end, those of Len Hutton, Denis Compton and Tom Graveney.

For seven years Bradman played under the Laws of the game mastered by Hobbs; but then, as for W. G. Grace in the transition from underarm to overarm bowling, the introduction of the new l.b.w. law of 1935, meant habits and techniques had to change to meet bowlers with an important strength added to their attack. He still outshone all other batsmen and, after the second World War, he competed with cricketers who had never known first-class cricket otherwise.

He was still outstanding, not by head and shoulders but, almost, from ankle upwards. If he did not bring a new perspective to the art of batting, he brought a different magnitude. He lifted averages from the 50's made by other outstanding batsmen of his time to an average of 95 an innings! In 52 Test matches he played 80 innings and averaged 99.94! Need more be said on this question of the best batsman?

Every cricketer during Bradman's playing days voted him the best cricketer of all time: but older cricketers and critics found it hard, and were perhaps unwilling, to transfer their eulogies from proven favourites or demote a schoolboy idol.



Don Bradman – the best batsman?



George Headley - batsman of the West Indies

Donald George Bradman was born at Cootamundra, a small up-country town in New South Wales, Aug. 27, 1908. His father was a farmer and the family moved to a property at Bowral, about 50 miles from Sydney, when Donald George was two years old.

In due time he went to the Intermediate High School and like every Australian youngster he entered enthusiastically into the games.

Boredom at home was avoided by playing a game he evolved with a golf ball and a cricket stump. There was a water butt surrounded by a low brick wall in the garden. The game he evolved was to hit the golf ball at the wall, or the tank, and as it darted back at unexpected angles try to keep it going backwards and forwards with the stump.

When Don was in his early twenties I saw him give a demonstration of bouncing a golf ball with a cricket stump and he did it twenty times easily. 'When my luck's in I get towards a century,' he said. I found that other cricketers when their luck was in struggled to double figures.

At the bottom of the garden there was a wooden fencing with the uprights nailed to long horizontal half sections of a tree. The horizontals were about eighteen inches from the top and bottom of the fencing.

Another game was to throw the golf ball at the fencing, field the rebound and, in the same action, try to return the ball to hit one of the cross members, and again field the rebound.

Cricket at school and on the Bowral ground was played on a concrete pitch. It is so all over Australia. Only the Test centres and the top grade club sides can afford to have what in England we might call a turf pitch. In reality these surfaces are laid like concrete but instead of using a sand and cement mix, they use a river silt. The most famous comes from the Bulli River. When watered and rolled it looks like a strip of smooth black concrete but, cricketwise, it has the advantage over concrete that the ball does not whizz off so fast and it has a certain amount of resiliency. The ball does not bounce so high.

Nowhere in Australia have I seen a ground where, as in England, a section of a field can be cut, watered and rolled, raked, watered and rolled, until a surface suitable for cricket is obtained. The soil in Australia is too sandy to permit a natural surface.

However, concrete or turf, the pitches in Australia are true.

One can only imagine how easy the young Bradman found the use of a cricket bat and a cricket ball after using a stump and golf ball. The fielding practice, too, quickened his reactions – doctors in later life commented on his remarkable powers of co-ordination. Not surprisingly he was outstanding as a cricketer and tennis player.

He was an alert agile fieldsman with a strong and accurate throw. He could stand his corner at practice sessions by bowling legbreaks and googlies. He bowled them well enough to convince me he might well have been a true all-rounder at cricket but he was only bowled after all else had failed and the captain was at his wits end. Nevertheless, the record books show Hammond bowled by Bradman in a Test match. But let me admit it – Hammond hit over the top of a full toss.

The young Bradman's first century was scored for Bowral school against Mittagong – his school's big match of the year. He made 115 out of a total of 156 but any tendency towards outrageous satisfaction in his performance was suitably reduced when the school assembled in the playground the next morning.

Hiding his own pleasure the headmaster spoke in measured tones, 'I understand a certain boy yesterday scored a century. That is no reason or excuse for leaving his bat behind.'

After leaving school, Don went to work for an estate agent. The young Bradman had so many requests to play cricket and tennis his boss was not long in telling him that one game, yes, cricket or tennis, but not both.

The decision was made easy for the lad because he was chosen to play in the cricket week in Sydney – an occasion when all the best teams and players from the country districts are on show. Of course, it is an occasion which is used for talent spotting by the State selectors and the senior grade club sides.

The slender, pale-faced lad from Bowral, was noted. He was invited to the nets at the Sydney Oval and in December 1927 was selected for his first big game, New South Wales v South Australia. He marked the occasion by scoring a century, 118 and 33 in the two innings, and he followed on with scores of 73 and 134 in matches with South Australia and Victoria in the same season.

At the start of the 1928 season, at 20, he was a regular choice for New South Wales. In the October of that year, just about the time that Percy Chapman's team arrived in Perth for their first

match in Australia, Bradman gave signs of things to come by scoring 131 and 133 not out in the two innings of New South Wales against Queensland. When the M.C.C. team, after playing in Perth, Adelaide and Melbourne arrived in Sydney, the young Bradman scored 87 and 132 not out for N.S.W. against them and, in addition, he surprised Wally Hammond with the speed and accuracy of a return from the covers, and ran him out at 225.

Such performances could not fail to impress the Australian selectors and, as expected, Bradman was chosen for the first Test match. He scored 18 and 1 and was dropped from the team! How mistakenly his dropping was amply shown when, chosen again for the third Test, he scored 79 and 112. In the fourth Test he made 40 and 58; in the fifth, 123 and 37 not out.

At the end of the series he had established himself in the Australian team. Although far from robust looking, he proved he was wiry and had vast reserves of nervous energy.

He could bat through the longest innings without flagging as he showed when he made his first really big score, on January 24, 1929 with a score of 340 not out against Victoria. He was scampering the short singles as energetically at the end as at the beginning of his innings, and the game has seen few batsmen move quicker between the stumps or judge the short single better. A maiden over against Bradman was not only a tribute to the bowler but to the close-in fieldsmen, too.

Surprisingly, English cricketers on that tour did not come back to England with any real conviction about the greatness of Bradman. They seemed to be much more impressed with another young New South Wales batsman Archie Jackson who had scored 164 against England in the 4th Test at Adelaide. 'They will both get a lot of runs but Jackson is a good 'un,' they said. The emphasis on the 'is' left no doubt about who they fancied.

In Australia, during the 1929-30 season, Bradman made a second entry in the record books with a score of 452 for New South Wales against Queensland, thereby beating Bill Ponsford's highest individual score of 437. Many more were to follow.

Bradman and Jackson were both chosen to come to England with Woodfull's team in 1930 but it was Bradman who straight-away began to make the critics and spectators in England sit up and take notice. Whereas Jackson found the slower pitches in England to his disadvantage, Bradman found the easier pace

greatly to his liking. He had all the time in the world to make his strokes and runs flowed from his bat in what seemed an unending stream.

Woodfull and Bradman in a second wicket partnership against Worcestershire in the opening match of the tour scored 208 runs in 130 minutes. Bradman went on to score 236 in a stay of just over 4½ hours and, apart from a full blooded return catch when 215, he gave a chanceless display.

He followed this with a score of 185 not out in the next match against Leicestershire, was rested for the third game against Essex, and then played against Yorkshire at Sheffield.

This was my first of many meetings with Don Bradman. I was the newest member of the Yorkshire team and Herbert Sutcliffe and Maurice Leyland were the only two of our players who knew anything of him. They had been members of the side which toured Australia.

It was a game ruined by rain. The match started on a wet pitch and Yorkshire, batting first, made a good start, only to be skittled out with some excellent legbreak-googly bowling by Clarrie Grimmett. He took all ten Yorkshire wickets at a cost of 37 runs. The point in mentioning this is to impress that the pitch was not without help for the spin bowler although it was a long way from being a 'sticky'. The ball would turn without any viciousness.

Yorkshire had two star finger-spin bowlers in Wilfred Rhodes – one of the greatest 'all-round' cricketers the game has known – and George Macaulay, an off-spin bowler who had played for England and was a master of his craft. He was not a slow bowler, at times he was quite a lively medium pace.

His first ball to Bradman pitched quite good length about a couple of inches outside the off stump and moved inwards.

Bradman pushed his left foot in the line of flight of the ball and prepared to make a firm defensive push. Because the left leg and pad was now in the way of the bat as the ball bit into the soft surface and turned inwards (so far as the straight pendulum movement of the bat was concerned) Bradman did the only thing he could do, he hurried his stroke slightly in order to bring the bat round the left leg and played the ball in front of the body. He made contact with the centre of the bat but the ball went straight back to Macaulay who fielded it on the first bounce.

My fielding position was fairly straight mid-on. With the stroke

I moved behind the bowler in case he missed fielding it and I was in line with George as he walked back to his bowling mark.

'So this is the fellow we've been hearing so much about, Bill,' he said, 'I shall get him caught and bowled.'

It was obvious what George expected. He had only to bowl the same sort of ball which would not only turn inwards but would also brake slightly as it bit into the soft surface of the pitch – or 'hold one back' so that the ball went to the bat much slower than Bradman expected – and Bradman's hurried forward stroke would send the ball straight back to the bowler at catchable height.

With this little bit of background, the cricket which followed was, for me, as interesting as any I have ever seen. A couple more times George had the ball returned to him on the half-volley, but when he eventually made the expected caught and bowled of Bradman the batsman had made 78 runs in a partnership with Woodfull which had put on 107 runs in 100 minutes.

When Macaulay held one back sufficiently for Bradman to get down the wicket to the pitch of the ball he had driven it with tremendous power. If he pitched too short, Bradman either moved away from his stumps to hit the ball square on the off-side, or there were safe little singles as he played back and pushed the ball, with the spin, to wide mid-on where I went to field it. If the ball was quite short Bradman leaned back on a bent right knee and pulled with the power of a kicking horse to the square leg boundary. As he played this shot the wrists, from the vertical, turned over towards the ground as contact was made with the ball and as a result the ball was always kept down. He seldom hit the pull shot into the air. The highest point in flight was the moment of impact – and he hit the ball like a bullet.

In later tussles I had with Bradman I tried putting a fieldsman about ten yards deeper and forward of the square leg umpire and then bowling a deliberate long hop for Bradman to play this shot. Twice only in the many times I bowled to him did he hit the ball straight at this fieldsman and on each occasion the ball was too hot for the fieldsman to hold. No other batsman, in my experience, played this shot like Bradman. It was exclusively his and it brought him hundreds of runs. Every time he missed the fieldsman the scorers automatically put four runs to his credit. I had to forget it as a method of getting him out on a favourite shot.

It might have been worth trying with yet another fieldsman deep on the boundary edge so that the batsman would only get a single, but how much would this have weakened the general field placing? Most bowlers wanted extra fieldsmen when bowling to Bradman and it was a case of making the best use of the few allowed. This was the conclusion reached by every bowler who made a two hour acquaintance with Bradman. He was a good enough player to stop playing any stroke which he found unsuitable, too. He was completely master of himself and had no 'automatic reactions' in this regard.

George Macaulay at Sheffield smiled his satisfaction at getting Bradman caught and bowled.

'Well, I did him at last, Bill,' he said, 'But he's not overrated. When he gets on the good wickets he'll score a million.'

All bowling, all field placings, all attempts to subdue the young Bradman seemed to meet with the same results. He went on to score 252 not out against Surrey and on May 31 of that season, when the Australians were due to meet Hampshire, Bradman wanted only 46 runs for yet another entry in the record books - one of the few batsmen who have scored 1,000 runs in May. It is a rare performance when the weather remains good but in the wetness of this particular season, and by a player with a strong batting side and seldom getting two innings in any match, it was fantastic.

Unfortunately, Hampshire won the toss but any doubts about Bradman not having the opportunity were settled by Grimmett. This grand little bowler claimed seven wickets for 39 runs, and put Hampshire out for 151. Woodfull put Bradman in first. It was lucky Bradman on this occasion because he scored 47 not out to bring his total 1,001 when rain and bad light stopped play for the day - and he celebrated by taking his score to 191 out of a total of 334 on the Monday.

Bradman's big scoring was not confined to county opposition. It was not a case of a great batsman murdering second class bowling. The bigger the occasion, more reputable the bowling, the better he seemed to perform. He scored 131 in the second innings of the first Test at Nottingham. He scored 254 in the first innings of the second Test at Lord's, and then, in the next Test, at Leeds, he set the record books alight with what was at the time the highest score ever made in England-Australia matches, 334.

At the close of the first day's play he had made 309 runs, had scored a century before lunch, another before tea, and another before the close of play. By July 11 he had reached his 2,000 for the season!

The 'Boy from Bowral' was the talk of the country. From a wealthy cricket enthusiast in Australia came a cable asking him to accept £1,000 in appreciation of his wonderful performances. As soon as news of this gift was publicised some friends of England wicketkeeper George Duckworth sent a telegram asking him to accept 'one thousand thanks'.

Years after this big score in the Test at Leeds spectators described vividly the almost 'ruthless' way Bradman dealt with the rotund, heavyweight, slow bowler Dick Tyldesley of Lancashire who, no matter where he was placed in the field, found Bradman playing the ball just out of his reach on his right or left hand and kept him chasing the ball all day long.

But among cricketers it was another facet of Bradman's remarkable control which interested them. On one occasion, moving up the pitch with the intention of driving the slow bowler, the studs in his boots failed to grip and the batsman's feet shot away from under him. As he crashed to earth, Bradman allowed the ball to come past him, late cut it wide of the slipfieldsman, and then scrambled to his feet and ran two runs.

Maurice Leyland, England's most successful Test batsman against Australia, talked about this shot for years.

'If my feet shot from under me,' he said, 'My first reaction would be to save myself in the fall. I should probably have let loose of the bat and put my hands down to ease the crash – and been stumped by yards. Don played a cricket shot. His concentration, mind over muscles, split second ingenuity over what in others would have been automatic reaction – call it what you like – was amazing.'

Added Maurice, 'That little fellow's got something else besides every shot in the book.'

Bradman's considerable success, of course, brought its demands. He was wanted to make an appearance at all sorts of functions.

People did not realise that with the scores he produced, and the fact that if he was not batting he was running round the outfield, fleet of foot and with a fast return to the 'keeper that opponents had learned to respect, or that he was using a lot of

physical energy. They forgot, too, the unwavering mental concentration he needed.

Bradman, in addition, was a retiring man. He was a non-smoker and non-drinker. The lounge party and the hotel bar had no appeal to him. He was a good pianist and had a love of good music. He preferred the quiet of his own bedroom and was quite happy with a gramophone and some classical records. He wrote letters to his girl friend Jessie Menzies in Bowral – whom he later married – and went to bed early.

It was easy to fix the tag of being unsociable on him, but Bradman did not seem to care. Success in any walk of life brings its critics and in this regard cricket is not an exception. Cricket writers described him as 'A scoring machine' cold, inhuman, to whom the runs scored meant more than the method of compilation. 'There was not the warmth and humanity in his batting that was expressed by Jack Hobbs.' 'He was unorthodox and hadn't the technique to make him a good batsman on sticky wickets.'

But these opinions did not fool the newspaper editors. They realised that Bradman was news and everybody wanted to know more about him. He was asked to write articles and Bradman liked the idea.

There was no acceptance of easy money. He was prepared to write the articles himself and, if they were the result of an interview, he carefully vetted them before publication.

Cricketers on tour are banned from writing for newspapers and they are required to sign an undertaking to this effect. The fact that Bradman on this tour of England supplied a grand total of 3,170 runs, and in Tests alone had nearly 1,000 runs at an average of 99 an innings, did not persuade the Board of Control to overlook his violation of contract. They fined him £50 but one can presume that Don, returning to his job as a sales manager of a sports store, was quite pleased with the profit shown.

At cricket he continued in Australia just as he finished in England. In the Tests of 1930–31 against West Indies he made two big scores of 223 and 152 and in six innings for his State side of New South Wales scored 695 runs at an average of 115. Against South Africa in the 1931–32 season he hit four Test centuries with two scores over 200 and a highest of 299. He made 1,190 runs in the series – the highest aggregate ever recorded; Lawry's 979

against England in 1965-66 is the nearest challenge. Only once did Don's cricket career, which was to extend over another seventeen years, fall from the high standard he set on his first tour of England and that was during the 1930-32 'Bodyline Tour' of Australia by D. R. Jardine's team.

The earlier reference to having insufficient fieldsmen when bowling to Bradman was an experience now shared by every bowler in every other country.

It was a concern of Douglas Jardine who was determined to get the very best out of the fieldsmen he had, and he hit upon an ingenious solution.

If Woodfull, Bradman, Ponsford, McCabe and company could not be quietened with the customary 4-5 field placing (five men on the off-side and four on the leg, or vice versa) perhaps it could be managed with a 7-2 field placing? Jardine hit upon the idea of bowling distinct off-theory or leg-theory and packing the particular side of the field accordingly.

It was a theory which worked extremely well in practice, too; but it sparked off one of the biggest rows first-class cricket has ever known.

Nottinghamshire fast bowler Harold Larwood was the main cause of Australian discomfort. Bowling very fast and with beautiful accuracy he switched easily to whichever theory was required. On the concrete-hard surfaces of pitches in Australia he obtained not a bounce but a ricochet of the ball, almost like skimming a pebble on water.

Deliveries of identical length would go skimming through at different heights, sometimes less than the height of the bails, sometimes as high as the chest of the batsman. If Gubby Allen, Bill Voce or I—the other fast bowlers on the tour—tried to get the ball to bounce to shoulder height we had to bowl a deliberate bouncer, dig it in, and by this system we got the ball to bounce like a tennis ball and about as dangerously.

Larwood, however, was very different and Bradman, writing about this particular form of bowling some years later, states that he objected to it the very first time he saw it bowled—when he played for an Australian Combined XI against M.C.C. at Melbourne. He lodged a complaint with the selectors. In my opinion this was the only sign of a weakness in Bradman through his whole career as a batsman.

This type of bowling was nasty. At times it appeared physically dangerous because, as the Australian batsmen were not slow to point out, as they tried to protect their bodies with the bat, there were seven men on the leg side looking for catches.

When Schwartz and Bosanquet first introduced the googly (an off-break delivered with a legbreak action) into first-class cricket, it had the batsmen in a tangle until, by trial and error, they found the correct counter. When George Hirst first bowled his left-arm, banana-like swervers to an array of leg-slip or short-leg fieldsmen he had batsmen in trouble. There were many bruised thighs before the batsmen, again, found the counter.

Whether there would have been an answer to the Larwood ricochet I do not know. A clever Australian journalist called it 'Bodyline Bowling' and lifted it out of the realm of leg-theory conceived by Jardine. It was a form of attack which, before the Australians came to England for another series, had been frowned upon. It was banned in the Laws of the game soon afterwards. But I shall always wonder if Bradman, the greatest batsman in the world, would not have found a proper answer.

He certainly did not fail against it. His average of runs per Test innings was reduced from 100 to the more ordinary figure of 56. Stan McCabe made one glorious score of 187 not out at Sydney against this form of bowling but, generally speaking, the Australian batsmen were not successful, and Jardine's team had an overwhelming victory in the series.

Because of illness Bradman did not play in the first Test of this particular series which, in spite of the 187 not out by McCabe, finished with England gaining a ten wickets win.

He played in the second Test at Melbourne and, of course, there was a confident feeling among the home spectators that everything would now be in order. There was a crowd of nearly 70,000 packed into the huge Melbourne stadium to watch Bradman. Other players were merely pawns in the game. Even the potency of Larwood had not yet been realised and the word 'Bodyline' had not been coined.

I happened to be bowling when O'Brien was run out and Bradman, batting at No. 4. came to the crease.

Coming from the shadow of the pavilion into the bright sunshine he made a huge semi-circular approach to the wicket to give his eyes a chance to get accustomed to the light. The crowd cheered

his every step. No gladiator in Roman times had a more vociferous welcome.

They cheered right through the ceremony of taking guard and afterwards. There was nothing to do but wait until they quietened.

Eventually they did so. Bradman moved into position to take strike. I began the first steps of my run up to bowl.

The cheering started again. By the time I had taken two more steps it was almost deafening. Bradman moved away from the stumps, I stopped, and again came this period of waiting.

For the sake of something to do, rather than any bright idea on my part, I asked my mid-on fieldsman to go up to short leg for the first ball or two. After such a reception, I thought, Bradman would be very determined not to disappoint the crowd and would hardly begin by driving to mid-on.

The crowd quietened again, and once more I began my run up. But before I was half way to the bowling crease the cheering had started again. Bradman turned away. I stopped. And this time I motioned to my deep fine leg fieldsman to come more square.

I saw Bradman look at my short-leg fieldsman and then at the man moving into position almost behind the square leg umpire and I knew, as certainly as if I had been told by Bradman himself, that the batsman expected me to bowl a bouncer.

If only I can make him certain, I thought. I glared at him when the crowd again quietened and I began my run up to bowl. This time there were no cheers. As I went into the delivery stride I pulled a face as if there was to be tremendous effort. I bowled it short but did not 'dig' it into the ground, as you must to bowl a bouncer.

Almost as the ball left my hand, Bradman set himself for the pull stroke. I do believe if the ball had bounced as high as he expected, it would have been going yet!

All set for the ball at shoulder height, he suddenly realised it was coming to him at the height of the bails or less. He altered his shot and swung down at the ball, got the faintest of edgers to it without altering its direction, and the ball crashed into his stumps.

I could hardly believe my eyes. For the first and only time in his career, Bradman was out first ball in a Test match.

The crowd in the vast Melbourne stadium could not believe it either. A stunned and complete silence came on the crowd as

Bradman surveyed his stumps, turned, and walked slowly to the pavilion.

Jardine, fielding at short leg, seemed to be the only man abreast with things. He put his arms above his head and danced round and round in happiness like an Indian doing a war dance.

The silence held until Bradman approached the gate to the pavilion and then a woman began to clap. In the stillness of the stadium, all eyes went to the moving hands. The spell of stunned disbelief was broken, and immediately, such a hubbub broke out that the effect was startling.

In the second innings, on a pitch like 'Blackpool sands', Bradman rehabilitated himself and scored 103 not out against the ill-suited England pace attack and, backed by some excellent bowling by spin bowler O'Reilly, Australia went on to win by 111 runs.

But in the following games the pitches were more in keeping with Australian custom, true and hard.

The centuries of McCabe and Bradman were the only three figure scores made against Larwood in the series. The 'Bodyline' attack, christened in the next Test at Adelaide, triumphed. I believe the memory of 'Bodyline' and the 'Duck' at Melbourne rank high in the list of Bradman nightmares. He could not forget them; and, some twenty years later when, as Australia's captain, Don allowed Lindwall and Miller to bowl several fiery overs at Leonard Hutton, Len reports 'The Don' as coming across and saying, 'It isn't very pleasant is it? I wasn't the only one who didn't like it.'

Certainly, the only batsman I ever heard express a preference for the fast bowler who bowled short was Herbert Sutcliffe. It would be truer to say no batsman likes it but some play it better than others.

Some twenty years later, too, when I was travelling with Don on a plane from Sydney to Adelaide, he brought up the question of the duck at Melbourne and asked me to confirm that I bowled a bouncer which he pulled into his stumps from shoulder height.

With 'Bodyline' a thing of the past, Bradman's big scores returned and he continued to dominate the cricket scene. In England on the 1934 tour he scored 758 runs in the five Tests for an average of 94.75. He scored 304 in the Test at Leeds and 244 at the Oval – and in both these games I was one of the bowlers who suffered.

If Bradman had a weakness it was impossible for any bowler

or critic in the world to find it. We had charts prepared of his scoring shots.

They confirmed a knowledge gained by experience that he had all the strokes, all round the wicket. There were no gaps. He had so many shots it was a pleasure to bowl to him.

When a player is making strokes, hitting all your bad deliveries for four and a lot of your good ones, too, you always feel as a bowler that you have a chance of getting him out. He must make a mistake. He cannot go on and on.

Bradman did. Some critics referred to him as a scoring machine. Others said he was an unorthodox batsman with only runs to commend him.

If Bradman was unorthodox, meaning that his shots had not a text book quality, then I'm a Dutchman. He lifted his bat up in the direction of second slip, true, but he straightened it at the top and had a pendulum-straight swing to the ball.

Almost any No. 11 batsman can hit a half-volley towards the covers but a very good player can place the ball anywhere between mid-off and third man by merely quickening up or delaying the actual moment of contact between bat and ball. Having put the left leg to the pitch of the ball it is only necessary to let the ball come past the leg six inches, a foot, eighteen inches, and hit it with the downward sweep of the bat and the whole range of off-side shots is possible. Of course, it requires perfect timing but all good players have this wide arc of the field in which to hit a half-volley when they are in good form.

Bradman was never out of form. His footwork was so fast and effective that in addition, even to the faster bowlers, he could position himself so that the half-volley outside the off stump was exactly like the same ball, bowled to any other batsman, outside the leg stump. Bradman played a text book shot and hit the ball to wide mid-on for four.

He left his ground and moved up the pitch so quickly he made many good length deliveries into half-volleys. If the ball was short of good length, he pulled with power and always with that turnover of the wrists I described earlier. Or, he backed away from his stumps to crash the ball square – a shot Washbrook played well.

My former Yorkshire colleague, the late Hedley Verity, and I tried to analyse Bradman in all his accomplishments. We talked to other bowlers and batsmen about him and never found one who

claimed he had a chance of getting him out, except Alec Bedser, after the second world war.

At this stage the England tactics, to try and contain Bradman, were to bowl at the leg stump – almost as with ‘Bodyline’ except there was no bowler as fast or with the ricochet of Larwood.

Norman Yardley and Martin Donnelly – to mention two players who had a certain shot off to perfection – could hit a short half-volley ‘on the up’ as cricketers call it, from the leg stump away to the boundary just in front of the square leg umpire.

It was a shot requiring a very good eye and perfect timing... a lovely shot Bradman before the war played this stroke to perfection. He tried it after the war to try to break the negative leg stump attack by the England bowlers and was caught at leg slip by Hutton off Bedser. It happened three times, and both Hutton and Bedser were convinced they had found a weakness.

I argued it was the first sign that Don’s eye and timing was not the same as twenty years earlier. Even his big scores now were in the 100’s, not in the 200’s and 300’s. I felt it was something he could easily put right.

Sure enough, he cut out the risky shots, took a little bit longer to make his centuries, but made them just as regularly as he did before. He accepted some limitation.

In his pomp days he accepted *no* limitation. In fact, Verity and I found one of the best ruses when bowling at Bradman was to spend a bit of time altering the fieldsmen, moving a man say from slip to coverpoint.

You could almost bet that Don, champing at the bit because of the delay and hold-up of the game, would try to make you look an utter fool by hitting the next ball past the new fieldsmen or through the gap you had left by moving him.

It was a dodge you could not use very often because the crowd got impatient at the delay and they hooted derision when Bradman, as so often happened, made you look a fool.

But once, when this switch of slip to coverpoint had been made, the next ball was bowled deliberately down the leg side short of length.

Quick as a flash Bradman moved away and made a perfect late cut, but, unfortunately for him his off bail was in the way of the gap in the slips.

His dismissals mostly came as the result of some mistake on

his part but just occasionally the bowler had, for the want of a better word, a psychological success. I remember on one occasion when Bradman was trying to 'farm' the bowling, take all the strike, he chipped me down to third man six or seven times for a single off the last ball of the over.

I put three fieldsmen to stop this shot, and then unexpectedly for him I bowled a yorker. I had a bit of luck. It was a perfect yorker and Bradman, setting himself for the chip shot, had his stumps shattered.

Instead of walking diagonally away from the wickets to the pavilion he walked down the pitch and with a smile said, 'Well bowled, Bill, one up to you.'

It was the nicest thing I've ever had said by an opponent. It compensated for the many times when I've involuntarily exclaimed, 'Oh, good shot' or, more tersely, when yet another of my intended wicket-takers had been crashed to the boundary, 'Blast'.

On a sticky wicket at Lord's in 1934 Bradman, a stranger to what we know as the technique of sticky wicket play, was dismissed very ingloriously by Verity, swinging to leg and skying a catch to the covers.

The critics immediately proclaimed he could not play on sticky wickets.

They conveniently forgot that, in Australia, there is no attempt by the batsmen to play cricket on a sticky wicket. Conditions are impossible with balls of identical length skidding through like submarines or jumping past the chin. The method is to trust to luck and swing the bat.

Bradman played enough innings against a turning ball to convince Verity and every other spin bowler that he was still a great player – and, in all conditions, the greatest in the world.

Other big events in his life saw him marry his girl friend Jessie from Bowral in 1932 and the Bradman's had two children John and Shirley. In 1934 he left Sydney to become a member of a stockbroking firm in Adelaide and he took up a residential qualification for South Australia. He took a house in the blue hills of Mount Lofty, just outside Adelaide.

He was made an Australian selector when playing for his country and his state side and since that time he has always held an important place in cricket administration. After the war, his was the most powerful voice in Australia. He had the authority of

great performances behind him, a cold analytical approach to problems, and a deep love of the game.

He became captain of Australia against G. O. Allen's team of 1936: he failed with the bat, and his leadership began with a defeat by 322 runs.

Australia lost the second Test by an innings and 22 runs. But then, Bradman started again. In the third Test at Melbourne he scored 270 runs in the second innings, won the match, and went on to win the rubber.

Bradman soon showed that he was shrewd, knowledgeable, and – I say this as a compliment – a hard captain. He played to win – and by as big a margin as possible. There was no pulling of punches, no concessions, perhaps almost, no friendliness – until the game had ended. If there was an advantage to be gained in the Laws, he took it. At dinners he spoke well, said the right things, and was an expert diplomat.

When Len Hutton, in 1938 at the Oval, beat Bradman's 334 at Leeds with an innings of 364 it was the Don himself who went to very short leg to try and upset the Hutton concentration.

'My word', said the critics, 'Bradman tried hard not to lose his record.'

Of course, he tried hard. It would have been wrong any other way and, if the approach to a century or any other record can be used as a means of harrying the batsman, any captain would be wrong not to use it.

Bradman continued his leadership of Australia after the second world war. He led Australia to victory in Hammond's tour of 1946–7 and won the series in England in 1948 when, now moving into his fortieth year, he averaged 72.57 in Tests and had the highest aggregate of runs on the tour, 2,428, with an average of 90.

In the fifth Test of this tour, his last Test appearance, which Australia won by an innings and 149 runs, Bradman was cheered by an English crowd all the way to the wicket. He was bowled second ball for a 'duck' by slow bowler Eric Hollies.

He failed in his first Test, he failed in his last. He failed when he was made captain. But in the meantime he had made thousands of runs and what England thought of Bradman was shown in the honours list of 1949, when he became Sir Donald George Bradman,

He made 41 of his 117 centuries in England; 37 times he made

scores of more than 200, and six times over 300. On his first appearance in first-class cricket he scored a century and he did so in his last – his own testimonial match which brought him a cheque for £9,342 18s. 8d.

Sir Donald's visits to England did not end with his playing career. He came to England as a journalist, occupying the unique position of helping to choose the Australian team, resigning from the committee, and then coming to England to criticise the players he had chosen. He did it fairly, seeing the game through the eyes of a cricketer, never descending to sensationalism, and he enhanced his reputation. On his return to Australia he was re-elected as a selector.

He wrote one of the best instructional books on cricket ever published and in the committee-room became as powerful as he had been as a player.

Of his cricket he said, 'Style as style I have never studied. My batting was dictated by the need of the moment.'

The need of the moment, the hour, the day, is for a batsman to score runs.

Donald George Bradman fulfilled that need as no batsman before or after him. His style in doing it gave pleasure to countless thousands and, if you have not guessed, to one bowler in particular who yielded, so reluctantly, so many of those runs.

SIX

George Headley

by C. L. R. James

THE BARE facts about Headley are striking enough. They are not only illuminating in themselves. When fitted into a wider scope and more organic reference they impose formidable, almost terrifying questions.

Here are the facts: - born in Panama of Jamaican parents, Headley is sent to Jamaica about the age of ten in order to be sure to get a British education, at least an education in the English language, and not in the Spanish native to Panama. In Jamaica he begins to play cricket as did all little boys in Jamaica in those days. He does so well that in 1928, not yet 19 years of age, he is brought to the notice of the cricket authorities in the island. He does so well in trial matches that he is given an opportunity to play for Jamaica against a visiting English first class team. He makes 78 and follows it up with 218. Continuing to score heavily, he is an early choice for the West Indies Test side against the 1929-1930 M.C.C. team. Not yet 21 years of age, Headley makes 24 and 176; 8 and 36; 114 and 112; 10 and 223.

Naturally, he was a certainty for the West Indies trip to Australia 1931-32. He made 1,000 runs in the tour, two centuries in Tests, and from the beginning of the season he established a reputation as being in the full tradition of the great line of attacking batsmen. He came to England in 1933. West Indies played three Tests. Headley made 50 in the first at Lords, 169 not out at Old Trafford and before he could get going at the Oval in the third Test, he was stretched out flat on the turf, having missed a hook off Clark, the fast left-hand Northants bowler. He was third in the English averages for the season at 66 per innings to the 67 of Hammond and Mead.

In 1934-35 a powerful English team visited the West Indies. Headley did not score quite as usual. To begin with he made 44 and 0; 25 and 93; and then 53. That was good enough for most batsmen, but not George Headley. In the last Test in Jamaica England begun by making a mighty score of 849. Headley came into his own with 270 not out, and the Englishmen having to catch a boat, the game was left unfinished. He came to England with the West Indies team in 1939. He scored a century in each innings at Lords, 51 on a wet wicket at Manchester and 65 run out at the Oval when there was scarcely a man on the ground who would

have laid odds against his making at least one century. There his career really ended. In Test matches he scored 2,190 runs in 40 innings with an average of 60.83. Only Bradman's figures stand above this. In 40 innings he made 10 centuries, again approached only by Bradman. And those centuries were made against England and against Australia. Headley never collected centuries against New Zealand, Pakistan or India.

That historical account is, for historical purposes, quite adequate. However, it leaves unanswered the question of questions: how comes it that a little West Indian boy untaught, either by instructor or the associations of public school, university or county, how comes it that before he was 21 such a boy would have made himself into a cricketer who would have been welcome in any eleven that has existed in England or Australia between 1866 and the present day?

That is the problem which we have to face. For when all allowances are made for qualitative individuality, for historical idiosyncrasy, we still remain face to face with a miracle. And with a miracle one either faces up to it or evades the issue behind a barrage of words of mystification of phrases.

We shall face up to the miracle of George Headley on three grounds:

1. His individual uniqueness.
2. What he learnt of the game
3. How he managed to learn it.

The three points are more tightly intertwined, closer to being strands of a unity, than they appear at first sight. But as Napoleon used to say; first you engage and then you see. Let us engage.

THE INDIVIDUAL UNIQUENESS

Headley's uniqueness made itself effectively felt nearly 50 years ago when he was a boy in Panama and continues to be a notable feature of his personality to this very day.

George may have been eight, he was certainly no more than ten, when he stood on a field in Panama watching some men play a game of rounders (a sort of baseball with a soft ball). George did not understand what they were doing but merely looked on interestedly. Suddenly the ball was hit in his direction and the

attention of the whole field was concentrated on it. Somehow he knew that he was to catch it. At any rate he went at the ball, jumped into the air and pulled it down to the applause of the surrounding spectators.

To George's surprise he was surrounded by many of the players, grown men, who asked him if he had played before. George said 'No'. They wanted to know, at least some of them did, if he would play for their side in what appeared to be a big match due on the Sunday coming. George said that he could not decide, they would have to ask his parents. The leaders of the team accompanied George to his home to ask his parents if they would allow George to play with them on the Sunday coming. Somewhat bewildered but convinced finally that there was nothing illegal nor illicit involved, George's parents agreed. So next Sunday his new comrades in arms came for him and took him off to the field of play. George's instructions were very simple; he was to stand in a certain place and if the ball came in that direction he was to catch it. George obeyed orders. Still somewhat vague as to what it was all about, he stood where he was placed until the ball came sailing through the air in his direction. He ran for it, leapt at it and pulled it down amid jubilant cheers especially from those who had backed him: it seemed that the catch was made at a very critical stage of the game. George was loaded with presents and was taken home by a triumphant body of players who sang his praises to the delight of his still somewhat bewildered parents.

Headley has told me this story himself. And although he was already a famous cricketer when he was telling it to me, it was obvious that he was still nearly as mystified as he had been at the time. There is one great point which he missed and it can be missed to this day. The men who saw him make the first catch had no doubt whatever that if another catch came his way he would most certainly make it. Even at that age, on the field he gave the impression of competence, control and complete readiness for whatever fortune or misfortune might send his way. Never at any time during George's career was there a feeling among his colleagues or spectators that there was any situation on the field which he could not handle. He had this quality at the age of ten, and to us who knew him in the past, he has it up to this day.

To this day: I was in Jamaica in January, 1964, and naturally went to see George. He had put on a little weight, but his figure

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was as neat and as trim as ever. In May he would be 55. As usual we talked a lot about cricket, and before I left I asked him: 'Do you still play?' He laughed a little self-consciously. 'No,' he said, 'I sometimes demonstrate to my pupils at the nets, but I can't play in any matches. My problem is in my knees. I can't run and when and if I should manage to run a single, to turn for a second would be quite impossible.'

George was quite untroubled by this deficiency. There was no nostalgia, no sentimentality. That was how it was and he accepted it. But I know my man a little better than to accept at face value what he says about himself. I made further inquiries about his playing, and this is what I was told by more than one person. He does not play matches and maybe he can't run between wickets. But when he stands up in the nets with bat in his hands and pads on his feet, you still can see 'the one and only GEORGE HEADLEY.' I more than expected it.

WHAT HE LEARNT

If ever there was a natural batsman, Headley was one. However, in a West Indian island, George was surrounded by cricket to be absorbed at every pore, to a degree that I am sure he himself does not appreciate.

To begin with the technique of batting. In 1926 George was just 15 years old and, West Indian fashion, still in short trousers. Now, for many years it has been a tradition for county players, including some Test players, to visit Jamaica regularly for a few weeks of cricket in the spring. George was an inheritor of this tradition. In 1926 one such team came down including Ernest Tyldesley. In one innings Ernest made over three hundred runs and George sat and watched him make them.

Now, at his best, nobody played finer cricket than Ernest Tyldesley. Unfortunately he was not always nor even often at his best. But recalling that famous occasion George says: 'I watched him all day.'

And the gravity with which he imbued those words showed that on that day a landmark had been reached and passed. George Headley implied that he had learnt all that he had required to know about batting from watching Ernest Tyldesley.

There was however, another landmark. The second and last



Len Hutton - style and patience



Denis Compton – no one is unique but .

terrace in George's education was ascended in Australia. When he went to Australia in 1931, George already had a great reputation as a batsman. He had scored four centuries in four Tests against England, and against Lord Tennyson's eleven in Jamaica he had made 334 not out. This was the occasion on which Passailaigue (261 not out) helped George to a stand of 487 for the sixth wicket, which to this day remains the sixth wicket world record.

Apparently armed and fully equipped, George set off for Australia and began the season with scores of 25 and 82; 131 and 34. The 82 he made against New South Wales, and the 131, against Victoria in even time, was acknowledged by habitués to be an innings unsurpassed on that famous field. Then came for Headley a moment of truth. So far he had been his natural self, master of all strokes on the off-side with a special West Indian penchant for hooking short balls, especially off fast bowlers. Now, however, after his flamboyant mastery of everything on the off-side, the word went round in Australia; (according to George) 'Keep away from his off stump. You will never get him there.'

To keep away from the off stump meant to concentrate on the leg stump, and in innings after innings George faced this entirely new type of attack. The result was a period of crisis and unrelieved failure - 27 and 16; 0 and 11; 3; 14 and 2; 19 and 17. But by this time George had mastered the technique of attacking this new type of bowling: that is what mattered to him as a batsman, to be able to attack a bowler. He refers particularly to a great stand that he saw by Archie Jackson and McCabe against Grimmett bowling for South Australia. Each batsman made a century and George speaks about the innings with the same conviction of a landmark reached and passed, as when he watched Ernest Tyldesley.

'They played him one way all the time. Either back and forcing him away on the on-side, or when he flighted the ball, they left the crease and gave him the full drive.'

Whatever George had to learn he learned it well because henceforth his scores in Australia were: 102 and 28; 77 and 113; 75 and 39; 33 and 11; 70 and 2; 105 and 30.

George by now was such a master of on-side play that Grimmett considered him to be the greatest master of on-side play whom he ever bowled against, and Grimmett bowled at length to both Hobbs and Bradman.

Those were the techniques that George learnt on the road to becoming a master batsman. Both of them are indelibly linked with players foreign to Jamaica: in 1926 English batting, and in 1931-32 Australian bowling. But now I open a window into fields as yet uncharted. What made Headley the batsman he became, in fact the cricketer he was, he learnt above all in and from his native West Indies.

Headley learnt from the West Indies respect for the game; and secondly, a wholehearted belief that distinction in cricket was equal to distinction anywhere else. The whole personality, individual and social, could be devoted to it.

The deep inner respect for the game which distinguished Headley and his generation was made known to me through an accidental remark by George. He was captain of the West Indies side against Allen's team in 1947 and George, as the home captain, had to spin the coin in the first Test in Barbados. George found himself sweating after spinning the coin and it took him some time to find out why. George does not gamble but he loves to have a flutter, particularly in English racing. In the West Indies, in his generation, the sentiment was very strong that gambling and particularly that type of gambling which involved the spinning of a coin, was something wrong, something immoral, done outside the pale of decent society. So that when he found himself spinning a coin as preliminary to a serious decision on some aspect of cricket, he instinctively felt that he was doing something very wrong and broke out into a cold sweat.

He had to pull himself together and force himself to recognise that for a captain to spin a coin at cricket was not in any way a form of gambling. I knew the feeling and how widespread it was, and maybe still is, among West Indian cricketers. But I never realised how much it was part of the cricket personality until George related this experience to me, an experience which he obviously found quite inexplicable.

THE GRASS ROOTS

Yet the deepest response to cricket that was made by George Headley was the response to the ordinary people of Jamaica. Some attempt must be made to convey this background of the generation which made West Indian cricket what it is. And here

I shall make the attempt to convey what today is very vivid and organic to me but which I find little evidence of being appreciated elsewhere in the way that it should be. Unfortunately, I cannot give saws and instances from Jamaica itself. I have to depend upon experiences elsewhere. But what I shall now relate is characteristic of the whole British Caribbean from at least the last decade of the 19th century. Without some knowledge of it there is no understanding of what West Indian cricket is, or of how and why it grew.

In the last decade of the 19th century in a West Indian village of some three or four thousand people, there were two cricket clubs. One of them consisted of a body of young men who had adopted what was for them, a new style of over-arm bowling. In the village was another club which stuck to under-arm and consisted of gentlemen who were not exactly young. They had had time to build a cricket reputation and despised the young team with its new-fangled method of bowling.

The younger men challenged the older ones to a championship match. The ancients refused; they would have nothing to do with these up-starts. However, after a year or two it happened that both clubs joined a competition that had its centre in the capital of the island.

They therefore were compelled to play against one another. They applied for and got permission to play their competition match at home. The outstanding batsman of the young Turks was a teacher and assistant master of the government school. He was a favourite of the headmaster, who had been a great cricketer in his time and an under-arm bowler. The headmaster, however, was a supporter of the new style and he took it upon himself to coach the batsman who was his assistant. His method was somewhat unusual. But it was successful and is worth recording.

Every afternoon after school he had some of the older boys bowling over-arm at the batsman. He himself, however, bowled under-arm in the style that the rival team would bowl on the Saturday coming. He instructed the batsman not to make any stroke but merely to play forward or back, defensive, and that went on from Monday to Thursday. On the Friday afternoon he changed tactics and called upon the batsman to open out, to make strokes, all round the wicket. The batsman found himself in wonderful form. On the next day he went in first wicket down, made

48 not out and his side beat the under-armers by nine wickets.

A great supporter of the under-armers was Mr Blenman, the butcher. Old Blenman was himself past the age of playing, but he had made himself into a special protector or guardian of the reputation and status of the under-armers.

'Robert,' he said to the young batsman, 'you all have beaten us. But I am not finished with you yet. We will play you another game.'

'Ready for you any time,' said Robert, and forgot the threat.

About a year later, however, old Blenman turned up with a new challenge. He had a team, and would like to play the young men again. The young men were very ready, and on a day the match was played.

In his team old Blenman had brought a stranger. Nobody knew anything about him. But they soon learnt. The stranger could bat. He hit the bowling of the young men all over the place and if he hadn't been run out when 95, God knows how many he would have made. But the newcomer could bowl as well. And bowling over-arm, he proceeded to bowl out the young Turks. They were badly beaten and old Blenman's triumph was complete.

It was a year or two before the young men learnt who had so routed them. When the West Indies team of 1901 was chosen for England the young Turks recognised the name of C. A. OLLIVIERRE. He played so well on tour that he remained in England to play for Derbyshire.

Old Blenman may have had some connection with St Vincent. At any rate he knew something about this famous cricketing family of the Ollivierres. It seems that the old man had got into touch with Ollivierre and himself paid the expenses of one of them to come to Trinidad – not an unadventurous journey in those days.

That was the spirit that permeated their attitude to the game. That was the cricketing atmosphere over the whole Caribbean. That was the air that GEORGE HEADLEY breathed and fitted him to learn what Ernest Tyldesley and Grimmett had to teach him, and to bat probably in much the same way that Johnny Tyldesley batted.

In 1928 Headley's parents, having gone to the United States from Panama, had sent to Jamaica for their son to come to the United States to study a profession. Headley sent to Panama for his papers and if they had come in time he would not have made

78 or 228. He would not have played at all. He already would have left for the United States.

But there was some delay and therefore the visit of the English team found him still in Jamaica. However, after scoring 78 and 228, he was persuaded to give up the idea of going to the United States to study a profession, and to stay in Jamaica to play cricket.

Note, please, that there was no professional job which he could be offered. He was not offered any job at all. But he was obviously a fine cricketer, and therefore everyone took it for granted that he should stay in Jamaica and play cricket.

HEADLEY AT THE WICKET

We must now have a look at George Headley at the wicket. There we shall be able to learn what he contributed to cricket. We don't intend to inflict new or old quotations on the reader. Let George himself speak.

'When I think of the things I used to do, I tremble and marvel at myself.

'There was a time in my early days when I was always down the crease and hitting the sight-screen first bounce over the bowler's head. I couldn't do it now if I tried. In fact I could not try. I suppose it was youth and inexperience.

'But I have to say this. I used to go down and very rarely used to miss . . .'

Headley took this spirit into Test matches. Hear him again on the third Test against England's team in 1930.

'It was the last innings of the match and *we had to make runs against time*. Wilfred Rhodes had a wicket to suit him and on it he was still a dangerous bowler.

'He was dropping the ball on a worn spot outside the off stump and spinning it away, with the off-side well packed. It was impossible to get runs in the ordinary way. *Yet we had to win that match*. What to do? *I knew I had to do something*. So I decided to get down to Rhodes as soon as he delivered the ball and hit it full-pitch somewhere on the on-side boundary. Now I could not wait to judge the flight and choose the ball I would go down to. Rhodes was not giving the ball any air at all. I therefore had to make up my mind to depend upon his length, and periodically, once or twice an over, as soon as the ball was out of his hand, I

dashed down the pitch and depended on his length for me to reach him full pitch. I did it all the afternoon and we won the match. That was the Test in which I first got a second century in the second innings.

'However, I did not catch Rhodes napping. Once I dashed out and when I was well outside the crease, I saw the ball dropping feet in front of me. It dropped and spun away. I could do nothing and thought I was gone. But the ball spun out of the rough so quickly and so wide that the wicket-keeper bungled, and I was able to get back.'

Headley remembered also his last innings in Australia. He had by this time, completely mastered Grimmett and going in first-wicket down, in less than two hours he had made a brilliant century. He knew it was an outstanding performance because in those days the fielding side did not applaud, in routine fashion, a 50 or a century by the batsmen. As a matter of fact they did not applaud at all. But this day when Headley reached the century, Bradman, Ponsford, Kippax and the rest, broke into spontaneous applause.

As the years went by and the responsibility increased, Headley became perhaps less aggressive, less determined to break the spirit of bowlers. But he always remained a man who knew that the only way to be safe at the wicket was to establish domination over the bowling.

Headley at the wicket is best explained by Headley himself, sitting in his office in Kingston in the year 1964.

He gave me a vivid account of what constituted fine batting and I have never known him to be so consistently passionate as he was on this occasion. To explain himself he walked about the room using a flat bamboo ruler one foot long to illustrate the motions of the bat.

It seems that two famous players had come to Jamaica the year before and paid him a visit. George switched the conversation to modern defensive batting.

'I told them: what is this business of opening batsman batting for two hours and makingly 40 or 60 runs? I told them, that to do that was to play in the hands of the bowlers and captain of the fielding side. When an opening batsman behaved in that way and got out he left the bowlers and fielding side in full command of the situation. The business of opening batsmen is to break up the

bowling and make it easy for the batsmen who follow. They gave me some explanation which I could not accept.'

'What do you think is wrong, George?' I asked him, because this has now been a point of heated discussion in England for a number of years.

George began to swing the ruler in his left hand up and down.

'The point,' he said, 'is in the left hand. Too many of these modern batsmen are playing the ball in front of the wicket off their right hand. That is quite wrong.'

Over the years I had never seen him so emphatic.

'Every stroke in front of the wicket has to be guided, controlled, and given its force by the left hand and the left wrist;' the bamboo ruler swung up and down.

'All you have to do is to get there in time and then whatever the pace of the bowling you use the left wrist and left hand and you can put the ball wherever you please.

'For strokes behind the wicket you use the right hand and the right wrist. But as long as these batsmen are playing the ball in front of the wicket off the right hand and the right wrist, they will never be able to make runs off the fast bowling, it will always pin them down.'

I expect George was so heated because he could not give a demonstration in the field as when we used to talk in the old days.

I have recently noticed that the Jamaican Government has given him three months notice of its decision to end his job as cricket coach. What they will do for a cricket coach, I do not know. But in my view they will have to search far and wide before they find another cricketer so firmly based on first principles and at the same time, so easy and natural among them. It will be a long time before I forget his left wrist swinging up and down and the bamboo ruler showing how the fast ball should be driven through the covers. It was almost as good as seeing him in the old days.

However gaily and spontaneously Headley had danced down the wicket to hit the ball first bounce to the sight-screen, by the time he had reached maturity, this habit of going at the bowling had been incorporated into his technique and his conception of what was good batting. That can be seen most clearly in his attitude to batting on bad wickets. Headley has a reputation similar to that of Johnnie Tyldesley for the way he handled first-class

bowling on bad wickets. His record here, until clearly examined, is quite beyond belief.

In England on wet wickets in 1933 and 1939, Headley played 13 innings, made 50 seven times, only three times scored less than double figures, and in his other three innings scored 25, 35 and 40. His average is 39.85. For a similar series the average of Bradman is 16.66. What is noticeable about Headley and wet wickets is that he simply loved to bat on them. And his reason was, that on them, you could not play defensive cricket: you are compelled to attack the bowling; if the bowler pitched up, you had to drive; if he pitched short, you had to hook. 'No nonsense,' said George, and it is obvious that by nonsense he meant uncertainty as to whether to attack the bowler or not. When you are talking constantly to a great batsman or to a notable artist in any field of endeavour you remember not only what he says, but when he said it and how, and how often. And the two things that I remember most clearly in George's conversations are these:

First of all the wonder, perhaps nostalgia, perhaps – who knows? – a sense of guilt in the young batsman who danced down the wicket so happily to hit the bowlers first bounce to the sight-screen. And secondly, the elder statesman full of concern at what he considered a steep decline in a business in which he had been himself a great master, and was certain that he knew the remedy for the present discontents. In 1964 the bamboo ruler swung back and forth almost as flashingly as his bat between the wars.

To sum up, what George Headley gave to the game of cricket was this. Just at the time when the game was about to sink into its present defensive spell, Headley, in the West Indies and from the West Indies, restored to it the glamour of its best days, adding to modern technique the naturalness which gave his cricket an apparent spontaneity which added to its appeal.

THE UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL

Now after all this analysis, the opening of historical avenues of investigation, and so on, the entity which makes all the information and perspective alive, that entity is George Headley, the unique individual who has brought all these material facts into an existential vividness, the entity without whom they would be mere

statistics or observations on a piece of paper. Where the social and historical factors end and where George Headley the individual begins, I simply do not know. But I think that this sketch would be incomplete unless I give a picture of George Headley, the unique human being as he had his being. He and I watched part of the Manchester Test against Australia in 1938. During this Test O'Reilly did a superb piece of bowling. George had been watching him closely, and after O'Reilly had taken some three wickets in four balls, George shook his head and, as quietly as ever remarked; 'He is the best bowler I have ever seen.'

George does not throw superlatives around and I was profoundly impressed particularly because I had already come, with many others, to similar conclusions about O'Reilly. I expected it was my consciousness of George's self-control that prompted me to twit him. 'George, if you had to play him tomorrow, you would be a bit scared.' George turned to me, his reserve, as it rarely did, becoming gravity. 'He is the best bowler I have ever seen, but if I had to play him tomorrow he would be just like any other bowler I have played against.'

George, the unflappable. My problem is whether he was born that way or whether he began with instincts of the kind and his experience of cricket and his life of almost unbroken successes added to and fortified a natural inclination. There are other aspects to his character; an incredible modesty about his own play; a disinclination to go into any detail about his conflicts with West Indian cricket authorities; a vivid memory of personal kindnesses shown to him in Australia and in league cricket in England. But it is this unshakeable calm which, surprisingly enough, is the most striking hall-mark of this West Indian batsman who did everything that he was called upon to do.

We know too little as yet of West Indies cricket to be able to speak with more certainty, but once we engage we shall learn in time. Meanwhile, we will console ourselves by the fact that 2,000 years ago, Horace, facing the same problem could find no answer:

Some think that poets may be formed by art,
Others maintain that nature makes them so,
I neither see what art without a vein
Nor wit without the help of art can do.

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There is one point without which I would not like to conclude.

As we wrestle with, and probe into, the development of West Indian cricket, what we shall find will most certainly illuminate cricket and the cricketers who established the game before the West Indies learned it.

SEVEN

Len Hutton

by Colin Cowdrey

LEN HUTTON was the most complete batsman I have ever seen. Sad to say, Jack Hobbs had finished playing before I was born: and I caught only fleeting glimpses of Walter Hammond and Don Bradman – when they were both at the end of their careers, and before my eye was capable of technical criticism. Whereas I could see that Denis Compton possessed the rare, deft touches of the magician that Peter May was more resilient, so more powerful in a crisis; and that Sobers commanded a more devastating array of strokes, yet Len Hutton was, to my mind, more complete in method than any of them. There can be no doubt that he was one of the few truly great batsmen of all time.

In assessing him we must pay chief attention – as he did – to technique: and his technique was flawless. Any picture of Len Hutton is false which is not built round his impeccable technique. His defence was as faultless as any batsman's has ever been. He was more a stroke-maker than a big hitter of the ball and looked to play off the front foot, but the change in the l.b.w. law had much to do with this.

He was just beginning to find his feet after one full season with Yorkshire, when the l.b.w. law was changed. This brought about a significant change in his method. He had been brought up to admire Herbert Sutcliffe, whose first movement was always back and across the wicket. For a while he followed suit. Under the old l.b.w. law, the ball which pitched outside the off-stump and came back to hit the leg in front of the off-stump was of no consequence. Little wonder that Hutton should have seen so much to be gained from thinking in terms of playing off the back foot.

Then came the new law and the need for batsmen to review the situation. Sutcliffe's back foot method was exposed to a new hazard. Hutton decided to invest in an initial movement forward. Throughout his career he was looking to play off the front foot, a method he would not have evolved but for the change in the l.b.w. law at that point in his career. He became a superb off side player, second only to W. R. Hammond.

Those who saw him play before the war say that he was then almost as good on the on-side. There is no doubt that his accident,

the shortening of the arm, was responsible for diminishing his power on the on side. Where, as a youngster, he would lean on the ball pitched up on the leg stump and stroke it wide of mid-on, I do not, though, often recall him playing it in later years. It was clear that there was not quite sufficient leverage to do so and still to keep the ball down. Consequently, he would let the ball come on an extra yard and tuck it away past square leg or behind him. In the same way he learned to cope with the menacing short pitched deliveries from Lindwall and Miller. Rarely did he hook, nor would he attempt to stand up and hit the ball wide of mid-on off the back foot. At the last moment he would turn his bat into the ball and deflect it down through the short legs. It was exceptionally skilful, the way he overcame his disability.

He was, as I have mentioned elsewhere, one of the few batsmen I know who was better at playing the ball leaving him than the one coming in. Watching him closely from the other end (and incidentally this I have attempted to build into my own game) I noticed two things. First, he moved fast and late, very late, indeed, at the last possible moment – in defence. Whether it was an away swinger or a slow ball spinning away from him, he appeared to try and get on the other side of the line of the ball in the off side of the line and play into the swing or spin, the line of the bat moving from second slip to mid-on. In attack he would, very late, move into the right position to give himself sufficient room to bring power to the stroke. He was an artist, seeking and achieving technical perfection.

APPRENTICESHIP

His story begins in Pudsey the small West Riding woollen town, mid-way between Bradford and Leeds, which had provided the birthplace and home of Herbert Sutcliffe. It was here that towards the end of his career Herbert Sutcliffe was to spot this young thirteen year old cricketer, Leonard Hutton. Under the discerning eye of Sutcliffe, Hutton found his way to Headingley for a trial and there into the care of George Hirst, superlative cricketer in his own right, and a fine coach of sterling character.

Hutton was born into a family circle of cricket, where all those around him lived for the game and talked little else. For a youngster, blessed with rare gifts as a games player, this was just

the atmosphere he needed to break through to the top. It was soon evident that the young Hutton had an old head on young shoulders at an age when a youngster might be showing the first signs of promise. Like most great players, his basic game had been formed by the age of fourteen, and there was not much that needed to be taught by the time he came to play for Yorkshire – save just the experience which comes from match play.

Much of the credit must go, then, to his family who watched over his early days, for they, and they alone, were responsible for helping him with his technique. In Denis Compton's case, a natural genius, one wonders if he was taught anything. It all developed easily because he had a flair. If another new stroke were to be invented, it would only be a Compton who could create and perfect such a thing. Hutton, great as he was, could not be thought of in quite the same way.

Hutton, by contrast, responded to teaching and happily he had the capacity for learning quickly. He was always a good listener. Like his mentor Herbert Sutcliffe, he was an acute observer. I can picture him as a ten year old, absorbing the conversation of his elders, studying the various techniques of his family, and some of them were good players. Allied to this was a sense of dedication, a ruthless single mindedness which sought practice and more practice; practice became a hobby, nay, a part of living. He could see nothing else in life than the goal of playing for Yorkshire; England too perhaps but certainly Yorkshire. He just could not understand other youngsters who did not show the same love of cricket.

His early games in a School League team were played on rough pitches, but his good eye for a ball became evident. By the age of twelve he was playing for the Pudsey St Lawrence Second XI, and batting at number eight. After two seasons he was in the First XI and, furthermore, opened the innings. That season Edgar Oldroyd, who had played for Yorkshire and was a former captain of the local club, returned to become its professional. He was a fine player, even if he did not quite attain the game's highest honours. He possessed a specially good technique on bad pitches, and there is no doubt that the fourteen year old Hutton modelled much of his own game upon Oldroyd, scrutinising him from the other end. Oldroyd's influence at this point must have meant a great deal to him.

But George Hirst had already seen him and knew him to be a 'good 'un'. At sixteen he was playing with the Yorkshire Colts but did not impress in his first match. It is quite extraordinary (and a wonderful consolation to all aspiring youngsters who receive a setback early on in their careers) that he should have made a low score, in fact, ducks, on his first appearances for Yorkshire in the Second XI and First XI and for England in his first Test match. Interestingly his second Second XI duck should have been recorded against Lancashire for whom, on the same day, a fine century was scored by Cyril Washbrook, the man with whom he was to become linked in the years ahead.

But it is true to say that he never looked a bad player in his early innings with the Second XI: indeed in 1933 he scored 699 runs with an average of 59 and two hundreds. Could he make the next step?

Just before his eighteenth birthday Fenners (is there a better wicket in the world?) was the scene of his debut for Yorkshire. This was for him the greatest day of his life, the day he had dreamed about. One could imagine his feelings as he packed his bag on the night before the match. He had never known such tension on the morning of the match; every minute seemed like a lifetime. Anxious to be off the mark quickly, he pushed his second ball away and ran – only to be run out by a brilliant return from cover point by J. G. W. Davies: Yorkshire did not need a second innings. A week later he was given another chance – against Oxford University – and, after an unhappy five in the first innings, he was sent in to open the second with Herbert Sutcliffe. It spoke volumes for his temperament that he could overcome his 'nerves' and produce a flawless 57 not out. His captain, Brian Sellers, and Herbert Sutcliffe, never took their eyes off him. George Hirst was given virtually a ball by ball report. The wires were really beginning to buzz now and before the end of May he was invited to make his first appearance in a championship match against Warwickshire at Edgbaston. He had arrived.

ARRIVAL

After such a disappointing start, he had the thrill of sharing in an opening partnership of 267 with Wilfred Barber at Headingley. His contribution was 70 and, towards the end of the season,

another century partnership with Barber saw him going on to make his first hundred. It is interesting to me that he hit three sixes during his innings. In the five years that I was to play alongside him, I do not remember seeing him hit as many.

But, more surprising than that, is the fact that, after his great triumph at Worcester, he was rested for half a dozen matches, and so did not play much more cricket that season. The Yorkshire Committee felt that he was not robust enough to be thrown into the rigours of continuous cricket and, temporarily, he was withdrawn from the scene. This is very rare. I cannot think of a similar case in more recent times and I am perfectly certain if he had arrived this year, and not 1934, he would not have been accorded this treatment.

In 1934 and 1935, his first two seasons in the Yorkshire First XI, he played about half the number of innings that would be demanded of a first-class opening batsman in a normal season. He met with a few setbacks in 1935, but every cricketer has a bad patch at some time and, with batsmen, this usually coincides with unsettled weather and rough wickets. In a very short space of time he had to contend with batting on a 'sticky' in the Roses match, being beaten for pace by Larwood and suffering the ignominy of a pair against Essex. But the clouds soon parted and he was to score his only century of that season against Middlesex at Headingley.

In the February of 1936 he was to have his first taste of cricket overseas, for Yorkshire had been invited to tour Jamaica. Little did he realise that nearly twenty years later he would be setting foot on West Indian soil for the third time, to lead the M.C.C. side and score a double century in a Test match.

He was awarded his County cap in the summer of 1936 and collected a thousand runs for the first time, a target he never fell short of until the season he retired in 1955, ten times making 2,000 and, on one occasion 3,000. Incidentally, whereas he had been a swift runner in the outfield, with a reasonable throw, he was now developing a good pair of hands and took 26 catches.

The following year, 1937, he was being talked of in terms of England material and in the end scored more than 2,000 runs with ten centuries. His off-driving was becoming a feature of the English cricket scene, second only to that of Walter Hammond. Indeed, it was Walter Hammond who impressed and influenced Len

Hutton more than anyone else. He played alongside him on several occasions in that summer of 1937 and his memories are almost as clear now as they were then. Just as Hobbs might have been to Hammond, so Hammond came to be the inspiration behind Hutton.

I first came to know Len Hutton on the good ship *S. S. Orsova*, bound for Australia in 1954. I spent hours at the feet of the master, listening to him waxing eloquent – and he was, in the right mood. an extremely good talker on the game. We ranged from subject to subject, the tour ahead in particular, quite naturally, and we weighed the respective merits of all the great players. At the mention of Hammond his voice seemed to drop a little, his eyes took on a watery glaze as memories began to flood and it was quite clear to me that Hammond had meant more to him than any other player of his time. Like most Yorkshiremen, he was not one to lavish praise, but as he tried to portray the true picture of Hammond to me, he could find no flaw. Since then I have made a point of discussing the great W. R. with Compton, Washbrook, Evans, Wright and Bedser, each one of whom played under his captaincy, and each one held him in the highest regard, but Hutton clearly idolised him.

What a thrill, then, that in his first Test trial at Lord's in 1937 he should have scored a solid hundred, and by so doing shared the honours of the match with Hammond, who just failed to score a hundred in each innings. 1937 he looks back upon as a golden summer. A remarkable century against Kent when, in partnership with Barber, he scored 93 out of 116 in less than an hour and a half; against Derbyshire – comprising most of the strong side which won the championship in 1936 – he was at the crease for seven hours, amassing 271 not out. That week-end news that he was selected to play for England for the first time came over the radio. Just as important, to my mind, was the manner in which he was beginning to play. Nothing worried him. He possessed endless patience and superb powers of concentration.

Such is cricket that one moment there can be all the jubilation of attaining the mountain top and the next one can be ploughing the depths. This was Hutton's experience, for the following week he was rejoining Yorkshire, sadly licking his wounds after a most disappointing first Test match. He might have made a pair but, to his great relief, he did get off the mark in the second innings before being dismissed by Cowie for one. To one so intensely bound

up with it all, quiet, shy, introvert, this was a calamity difficult to bear. As he packed his bag for the next Yorkshire match, he must have looked wistfully at his new England cap and wondered whether he was putting it away for ever. He could only see ahead of him a long trail of continuous county cricket before he could win back his place.

Disappointed he must have been, but determined to make amends when the opportunity came, he produced some of his greatest innings for Yorkshire in subsequent games, with 155 in the County's match against New Zealand.

He would almost certainly have been selected for England in the second Test match, in any case, but this alone made the Selectors' choice a simple one. He recalls to this day the acute nervousness with which he approached this next Test. He felt that it was now or never and that his career was at the cross roads. He opened the innings with C. J. Barnett of Gloucestershire, a magnificent stroke player, a right-handed batsman much akin to R. W. Barber in his attacking style. Understandably, Barnett led the way and caught the eye. In their hundred partnership, Barnett was 70 to Hutton's 30, but the youngster went on to his first Test hundred. Amidst this rich array of batting successes, the Yorkshire captain called upon him to bowl one afternoon, against Leicestershire. He could produce some well flighted leg spinners and googlies in the nets, and they had been halted by a partnership which badly needed breaking. He not only broke it, but kept bowling, taking four for 25 in one innings and six for 76 in the second. Yorkshire won the match with a few overs to spare and, on their captain's admission, they certainly would not have done so without Hutton's contribution.

In these days of tours, year after year, he would certainly have been abroad in the winter of 1937-38. In that sense he was unlucky, but perhaps he benefited from the rest, for the Australians were to come in 1938.

All the world knows, how, at the Oval in that timeless Test, Hutton went on and on and on, past Sir Donald Bradman's record of 334 and, eventually succumbed after more than thirteen hours for 364. England came to this final Test one down (the other three had been drawn) and victory here could only mean a halved series. Groundsman Bosser Martin had seized upon the occasion to prove that he could produce a wicket which would last even a

timeless Test match. Those who played in the match declared that there were very few signs of wear at the finish. The toss, then, was vital, even more so since Bradman had decided to pack the side with batting, presumably in the hope of building up a large total himself. His heart must have sunk when the toss went against him, and that is the background to Hutton's memorable feat. McCabe and Waite opened the bowling, a moderate attack by Test match standards, it must be admitted, so that Hutton had plenty of opportunity to play himself in. Still, O'Reilly and Fleetwood-Smith had to be combated and, even on the most docile wicket, here were two fine bowlers: their combined figures of 172 overs for a return of four for 476 take some believing.

After Edrich had been dismissed early, Hutton and Leyland stood together for the rest of the first day, when the England total reached 347 for one. Hutton was 160 and he was, no doubt, grateful that the next day was Sunday and he could relax by the sea at Bognor Regis. Leyland was the first to go, but not before they had shared a partnership of 382. Hammond arrived at the crease just in time to see his own personal record in a Test match in England surpassed by Hutton. Hammond batted beautifully for 59 but, to everyone's surprise, Paynter and Compton were both out a few minutes later. It was Hardstaff, No. 7 in the batting order, who came to join Hutton, by this time in the tenth hour of his innings.

In the closing minutes of the second day's play, Hutton hoisted his own score to 300, and England were now 634 for 5. An enormous crowd sat tensely on the Tuesday morning as Hutton approached Bradman's world record of 334. Bradman made him fight for it, setting the field carefully. You could have heard a pin drop as Fleetwood-Smith looked like bowling him a maiden over when he was 331. At long last a chinaman strayed a little short and Hutton cut it fiercely to the rails. There was pandemonium. The game stopped. Bradman was the first to shake him by the hand, followed by the rest of the Australian side. Hardstaff and Hutton continued for a while, their partnership producing 215, until at length Hutton succumbed, exhausted.

It was not so much a beautiful innings as a quite remarkable achievement. It was certainly not an innings that people would choose to watch, nor he to play, all over again. But it was a special landmark in his career, which established him amongst the world's

great Test match batsmen. It had been a difficult year for him. After a superb hundred in the first Test match at Nottingham his finger was broken in the match against Middlesex at Lord's. This reduced the number of his appearances for Yorkshire and he made only 613 runs for them. However, this great triumph at the Oval had proved him fully fit again and an automatic selection as England opening bat to tour South Africa with M.C.C. the following winter.

Still very young, unusually quiet and modest, he did not find it easy to accept the adulation which inevitably followed his mammoth score at the Oval. It was comforting to have three other Yorkshiremen in the touring party, Yardley, Gibb and Verity, and even more fortunate to have Walter Hammond as captain. He batted well throughout the tour, scoring more than 1,000 runs at an average of 60, in spite of a fearsome knock on the head in the Transvaal match; he woke up to find himself in a Johannesburg hospital. This sort of accident can disturb a young player's confidence and, although it forced him to miss the first Test, he did not appear to be affected. He made a double century at Port Elizabeth, but could not really produce a long innings in the Test matches, 92 was his highest score, though this was a most valuable innings in the circumstances.

He enjoyed the tour immensely, but such was the standard he had set himself, that I believe in his heart of hearts he would have come back a little disappointed with his own personal performances. It must be remembered, I feel that, apart from the short trip to the West Indies in 1936, this was his first experience of a long period away from home, where he was left to stand on his own feet and was, at the same time, a public figure in his own right. This great journey broadened his horizon and it was only to be expected that the intense concentration he had been accustomed to bring to his cricket was affected to some extent.

This was his first experience of having to play abroad through an English winter and yet be expected to return fit in body and mind for another English season, after only a month's break. If there had been doubts about his stamina in the earlier years, now he was superbly fit. He was to score more than 2,500 runs, which included a remarkable innings of 280 not out against Warwickshire. In the first Test match against West Indies he made 196, followed by 73 and 165 not out in the third Test at the Oval.

His whole game was based upon a flawless technique and a defence more secure even, maybe, than that of Hobbs. Mentally he was now fully mature and physically he had filled out. No one could excel the artistry of his off-side stroke play. Concentration came easily. Something of the presence that had surrounded his captain, W. R. Hammond, for ten years or more was beginning to rub off on him. He was coming to be regarded as the master craftsman. For four seasons he had combined consistency with brilliance, averaging 61 and totalling about 8,000 runs. Sad indeed, that Hitler should have robbed him of six years on the pinnacle.

THE MASTER

The war could not have come at a crueller time for Leonard Hutton for, like so many others in their early twenties from various walks of life, he had just become married and was on the threshold of becoming established in a career. It was not surprising that he should join the Army Physical Training Corps, but the choice had its hazards. Very early in the war, on a Commando course, he fell and broke his arm. Having had mine broken by a fast delivery from Wesley Hall at Lord's in the Test match in 1963, I know something of the disappointment that an injury like this can cause to a cricketer. It is like the maiming of a pianist's fingers or a ballet dancer's toes. I was fortunate, in that mine was a clean break and nature was the healer in her own good time; but for Hutton, sad to say, it could not have been a more complex fracture, requiring several months in hospital and three operations, resulting eventually in the shortening of the left forearm. One can imagine the thoughts that were going through his mind over this long period. The fates had struck him a cruel enough blow with war bringing down the curtain on cricket. Now, if ever there was going to be peace again, he began to doubt what part he would again be able to play in full time cricket, if any. It was one thing for a doctor to declare the arm medically fit; it was quite another to put it to the test in the middle against the world's fastest bowlers. But, at least, it was something to have seen the expression on the face of the surgeon as he declared clean x-ray photographs to show that the graft had taken. It was not until May 1943 that he donned white flannels again, turning out, appropriately enough, for Pudsey St Lawrence.

Inevitably within Hutton's career, it seems, he was to score a duck, but at least he was in action, and this relatively unimportant failure really served only to re-kindle his old ambitions. Very soon he was striking the ball with all the old skill. It remained now to see whether the shortened arm was going to restrict him in any way when dealing with the lifting ball and against fast bowlers. He had to wait until 1945 and the Victory Tests for the answer to this.

England had been deprived of first-class cricket for five years and the turnstiles at Lord's could hardly take the crowds quickly enough as they flocked to see the great names in action once again. Sergeant L. Hutton played in all five Victory Tests against an Australian XI made up from the Royal Australian Air Force residing in this country. He opened with Flight Sergeant Washbrook, the foundation of a partnership which was to serve England so handsomely later. The Australian side possessed Keith Miller, young, lithe and immensely fit. It was just the testing ground Hutton required. In part, it was a psychological battle he had to face, although it would be unfair to underestimate the technical alterations that had to be implemented, due to the shortening of his arm. He practiced assiduously, taking every opportunity of match play, whatever standard of match was offered.

At last the war was over, and life began again for Hutton when May 1946 dawned to greet a new era of county cricket. Within a week or so it was abundantly clear that he was fully fit again, a greater player than ever; older, maturer now, a character in his own right. There was only the regret that his great talent should have been left to fallow for so long. The war-time partnership of Hutton and Washbrook welded itself successfully and happily into a combination good enough to be compared with that of Hobbs and Sutcliffe. If there was nothing particularly hostile about the Indian attack of 1946, there could be no questioning the speed and hostility of Lindwall and Miller in Australia in 1946-47.

Compared with his pre-war form, 1946 was very much a breaking-in year, but in Australia the following winter, under Walter Hammond's captaincy, he scored more than 1,200 runs at an average of 70, with five hundreds. True, Denis Compton was just as successful, perhaps more so; but we must remember that Hutton had to bear the brunt of the Australian fast attack. They

tried to unnerve him with a persistent barrage of bouncers, more indeed than any other batsman had to contend with. It was easier for them, for they did so in the knowledge that there was no fast bowler on the England side to retaliate. Three times in the Test matches Hutton and Washbrook began with three figure stands and so equalled the feat of Hobbs and Sutcliffe in 1924-25.

Back to the English season of 1949, Hutton again dominated the Yorkshire scene, scoring a magnificent 290 not out against Hampshire. But the international honours went to Compton and Edrich – their golden summer. In G. O. Allen's side for the West Indies there was no Compton, Edrich, Bedser, Wright or Hutton. At half strength, they got off to an appalling start and were further hampered by injuries. Mid-way through the tour Hutton agreed to fly out at short notice to assist them in the emergency, and a few hours after he arrived he was at the crease, making 138 against British Guiana. If he did not score a Test match hundred, he was the outstanding batsman, and this short spell in the sunshine was an ideal preparation for the biggest challenge of his career – that of Sir Donald Bradman's Australian team in England in 1948.

Cometh the hour, cometh the man, and such was his temperament for the situation that 1948 saw him in pre-war form, ten hundreds and an aggregate of 2,654 runs. With Washbrook he had the task of trying to lay the foundation of an English innings against what, if I may be allowed to hazard a guess, was probably the best equipped Australian attack ever to come to England – Lindwall, Miller, Johnston, Loxton, Toshack and Ring. That season a new ball could be taken every 55 overs, and consequently, Bradman did not have to call upon Johnston and Ring a great deal. He was able to use Toshack and Loxton, both good bowlers, to rest his three-pronged force – and what a force they were in their heyday – Lindwall, Miller and Johnston. Len Hutton can look back with justifiable pride that he came through this fiery ordeal with such success.

At Lord's, when the battle was toughest and Hutton the target under fire, the master was seen to falter. I was not there, but it is said that he was seen to back away once or twice. I find it embarrassing to read that the Selectors of the day were to seize upon these few moments of aberration and to drop him from the England side as an example. After all, he had borne it unflinchingly throughout Australia in 1947-48, at a time when we had

quite a lot to lose, should he fail. Now, with Compton, Edrich and Washbrook, he was one of the four great England players, a class above anyone else in the land. Indeed, of the four, he and Compton stood apart; Compton the genius with the spark, and Hutton the master technician. I cannot see that it was fair, on one experience, to hold the champion up to public ridicule at any time. It is difficult to estimate just what effect this extremely ungracious treatment had upon him. Most people, I think, would have been somewhat embittered. True, Hutton returned before the end of the series and re-demonstrated – not that it was necessary – his supremacy. Some, and they were mistaken in my view, were quick to say that the lesson had done him good. If there had been anything of a gulf between him and authority, an in-built barrier created by his own background and a biting sense of inferiority, then I am afraid, the breach could only have been widened, just at the moment when his character was broadening. There had always been accusations that the master had tended to play too much for himself. Most of the great players have tended to do so. On looking back, I think he might admit to this, holding that the professional cricketer, fighting for his own livelihood, must first and foremost feather his own nest. But at this point in time, Hutton was just reaching a point where he had done enough in the furthering of his own career. He was now a senior England player, being consulted on and off the field by his captain, alike for Yorkshire and for England. Just when he might have been softening, with a growing desire to contribute more to the good of the side and his fellow players, this sharp treatment must have been a very bitter pill to swallow.

However, he returned for the fourth Test match at Leeds and with Washbrook put on 168 for the first wicket, his own share being 81. In the second innings, Hutton and Washbrook again opened in a partnership of 129. Not often in any cricket, let alone Test cricket, does the side whose opening batsmen twice put up more than a hundred partnership in their innings, go on to lose. Yet this is precisely what happened.

In the last Test at the Oval, while England were being bowled out for 52, Hutton stood alone, completely the master throughout the innings, being last out, brilliantly caught by Tallon, wide down the leg side with his left hand close to the ground. In the second innings, facing arrears of 337, Hutton was top scorer with 64 and

could find no adequate support. It had been a torrid year for England batsmen. It was surprising, really, that the two opening batsmen, Hutton and Washbrook, should have been the only ones to weather the storm. The Selectors could never again think of him in terms of being windy to fast bowling after this performance, and he was never dropped again until his career came to an end. The proof of the pudding was in the eating. For his next twelve games against Australia, with Miller and Lindwall at the very height of their powers, his aggregate was 1,200 runs with an average of 75. I question whether any other player in the history of the game could have matched this excellence in the face of such intensely fast bowling.

It must have been with something of a holiday feeling that he set sail with George Mann for South Africa in 1948-49. Compton probably took the eye more than anyone else although, in terms of figures, Hutton was scarcely less successful. The now trusted opening partnership, fashioned three years earlier during the Victory Tests, broke a record set up by Hobbs and Rhodes at Adelaide 37 years before, when they put up 359 for the first wicket against South Africa in Johannesburg. There was nothing particularly menacing about the South African bowlers and it must have been a relief to be walking out to open the innings for England without the physical fear engendered by Lindwall and Miller.

Back in England, in 1949, Hutton topped 3,000 runs for the first time in a season. Only Compton, Edrich and Hayward had scored more runs in a season than Hutton scored that year. He just missed 1,000 runs in May and in the month of June he made 1,294 runs which became, and remains, a record for the number of runs in any one month, beating Hammond's 1,281 in August, 1936. Later Hutton joined another select band of C. B. Fry, K. S. Ranjitsinhji and Herbert Sutcliffe, who scored a thousand runs in each of two months in one season. It is typical of the swinging fortunes of this game of cricket that, amid this continuous trail of success, he should have been bowed down with three successive ducks at one stage, one of them in the first Test match against New Zealand and a 'pair' against Worcestershire.

I remember Leslie Ames, the prince of wicketkeeper-batsmen, recounting the story of his experience against W. H. Andrews of Somerset, a good county bowler. If you were to judge simply by

the success he had with Leslie Ames over the years, you would have thought Andrews was Barnes, Larwood and Trueman put together. After a while, he had only got to take the ball and Leslie Ames began to quake, such was the measure of his psychological effect. Most of the leading batsmen can look back upon some bogey man, if not quite to the extent of the Ames-Andrews duel. With Len Hutton it was Reg Perks, of Worcestershire, who was always a thorn in his flesh.

On closer analysis, this success of Perks over Hutton may reveal the only flaw in his technique. Although he could play every stroke, he preferred playing the ball to, and through the offside. He was always that bit better at coping with the ball leaving the bat than the one coming the other way. To say there was a serious flaw in this direction would be an exaggeration, but it is true, I believe, and record books show this, that the off spinners used to find their way through between bat and pad sufficiently often, anyway, to give them some degree of hope. The same applied to the quicker bowler who brought the ball at all late. In contrast, Hutton thrived on a slow left-hander or a slow leg break bowler. What is more, his mastery with the new ball, swinging away to the slips, was quite uncanny. I do not know of anyone else who could have withstood the wiles and skill of Ray Lindwall quite as well as Hutton.

Of his twelve hundreds in 1949, he was most proud of the 206 at the Oval against New Zealand, 201 in the Roses match and his 269 not out against Northamptonshire. He was in need of a rest and, fortunately, there was no winter tour in 1949-50 prior to the visit of John Goddard's great West Indian side to these shores in 1950. Ramadhin and Valentine brought a new dimension to batting and they wove a spell over the English batsmen which gained and maintained the upper hand for them all the way through. Only Hutton came to sort out the mess, and it took him most of the series to unravel the mysteries. After the West Indians had demoralised us and won the rubber by an amazing margin, they won the toss at the last Test at the Oval and scored 503. It took a great deal of courage on Hutton's part to dig in, in an attempt to stem the West Indian tide. He alone stood firm, very much as he had done against the Australians two years previously when he scored 30 out of 52. But this time his contribution was 202 not out in a total of 344. This was his benefit year, and I have a feel-

ing that the extra burden was contributory to a leaner season than he and his supporters would have hoped. However, the Yorkshire folk were very loyal to their idol and they contributed a larger sum than any other Yorkshire cricketer had received.

With his benefit year behind him, he set sail under Freddie Brown's captaincy with M.C.C. for Australia. Ramadhin, for all the problems he posed, presented no physical fears. This in itself would have been a relief. But here he was again in the forefront, far and away the best equipped player in the country, if not in the world, having to bear the brunt of Lindwall and Miller all over again. In his 35th year, he was phenomenally successful, with 1,382 runs on the tour, whereas the next batsman, Simpson, made more than 200 less. In the Test matches he scored 533 runs at an average of 88, whereas the next, Simpson, again, had 200 less at an average of 38.

Freddie Brown's team came very close to winning the rubber. Ironically, they possessed the best batsman in Hutton, the best bowler in Bedser and the better wicketkeeper in Evans. There was no one in the same class as Hutton with the bat on either side. The wickets were a little slower than in 1946-47 and, consequently, the Australian fast bowlers were not able to create the same havoc with their bumpers. Even so, no praise is too high for Hutton's consistent mastery of their pace and skill. If he had received any support at all, we must have won the series.

In 1951 against South Africa he made a hundred in the fourth Test at Leeds and produced one of the innings he will always remember in the third Test at Old Trafford. England were left 139 to win, not an easy target in the conditions, made more difficult in that he and Ikin had to start the innings in the last hour of the day, in a poorish light on a venomous pitch. They survived, both heavily bruised. Next morning the wicket was more placid and Hutton went beserk. As he moved towards his hundred, it suddenly dawned on people that this could be his hundredth hundred. At length, on 91, there were, sadly, only four runs required to win, and the heavens opened. As the players sped from the field, no one could have given much chance of there being another ball bowled in the match. It could only happen in England that the skies were transformed in an hour and the ground was soon fit for play. But everyone had given up any serious thought of Hutton collecting his hundredth hundred – except Hutton. After

all, how could he possibly add nine runs to his score in the act of making four? From the first fast bowler he took a two and a single; scores were level, one run was needed for victory and Hutton needed six. 'He carved out a prodigious stroke and the ball flew high and far over cover point's head into the deep field. For a moment it looked as if a miracle might have happened, but the ball fell just inside the rope and against his name is recorded an unbeaten 98 of the best runs scored in Test cricket. Six days later he was to collect the celebrated hundred against Surrey at the Oval. On the Saturday night he was 61 not out and a crowd of 15,000 came on the Monday morning to see if he could reach the milestone. He did not let them down. Only twelve others had done so, Sutcliffe being the only other one from Yorkshire. Since then, Compton joined them in 1952 and, more recently, Graveney, to make the immortal band fifteen strong.

THE CAPTAIN

India came to England in 1952 and during their early matches controversy raged about the man best to captain England. Eventually tradition was broken with the appointment of a professional captain of England for the first time, and although Yardley was still captain of Yorkshire, there was the unusual situation where his senior professional left for Test matches to captain England. Throughout three series at home and two M.C.C. tours abroad, Hutton steered the fortunes of England's cricket – never to be defeated. In his first Test match as captain – by happy chance at Headingley – he was given by the Selectors a young, raw fast bowler by the name of Trueman. In the first innings the new recruit took 3 for 89 in 26 overs, a more than adequate debut, but he was generally considered on the erratic side. However, he was to make history in the second innings when India lost their first four wickets without a run being scored, and the crowd was stunned into silence. No Test side had ever made such a bad start to an innings, and perhaps this was a happy augury to mark the start of Len Hutton's new career as England captain. In the second Test at Lord's, the new captain scored 150, just to show that his batting skill was not going to be affected by cares of office, and another hundred at Manchester in the third Test, 86 in the last. All the while he was still piling his usual quota of runs for York-

shire. It had been a wonderful season for him and ensured that he would be captain against Australia in Coronation Year, 1953.

Twice under his leadership were Australia to be beaten, and there is no other instance where the England captain has played throughout a Test series at home, led his side to victory, then taken his side to Australia – to win again. It was a very hard-fought series against Lindsay Hassett's side. Some people could say they were dull matches. The first four Tests were drawn and it was not until the Oval, when Laker and Lock began to extract some help from the turning wicket, that the scales tipped England's way. For Hutton it was a dream come true, to be in the saddle against Australia at Lord's and to score 145, as good an innings as he had ever played against them. This was the match that seemed lost on the last day, until Bailey and Watson held fast to keep the series alive.

Draws at Leeds and Manchester meant that it was all to play for at the Oval. This deciding game remained evenly poised until, on the third day, the wicket started to take spin and Hutton was lucky to have at his disposal Laker and Lock on their home ground. The Australians collapsed dramatically and we were left little more than a hundred runs to win the Ashes back for England, the first time since D. R. Jardine's success in 1933. In the early stages, the crowd was hushed and every run seemed an eternity. Having got so near, Hutton saw to it that the foundation was laid and it was only fitting that Compton and Edrich should have been at the wicket in the closing overs and that Compton should have made the winning hit.

All over England cricketers rejoiced. Hutton was the toast of the land – not to mention Yorkshire. As with anyone in the public eye, he had collected more than his fair share of critics, fearful that his defensive outlook would creep into and influence the game to a marked degree. There are many who still hold this against him, but they cannot deny that he was remarkably successful.

For all this, there was never any question about a change of captain for the West Indies, and he became the first professional to lead an M.C.C. side overseas. On paper it was a very good side, but they were thrown into Test matches without sufficient time to acclimatize themselves to the difference of heat and light. It is no surprise, then, on looking back, that they lost the first two Test matches. Not unnaturally, the critics began to sharpen their pens.

Hutton, the captain who could do no wrong that sunny afternoon at the Oval a few months previously, was now becoming the subject of an intensive scrutiny. He may have been disturbed by it all, but he never appeared to bat an eyelid. Rather, he walked in to bat in the third Test and made 169. The fourth Test was drawn and so we had to win the fifth Test in Jamaica. Bailey bowled beautifully, taking 7 for 34 and gave us the chance. Hutton made no mistake with a glorious double century and we were able to level the series. It had been a magnificent recovery.

He returned to England to a mixed reception. There were plenty of critics still complaining about his approach to the game. But no one could point a finger at his own personal courage in as testing a situation as any with which an England captain had been confronted. Moreover, his own inimitable batting skill could not be faulted. He must have been stunned by the weight of opinion which seemed to demand a change.

For a while; David Sheppard became the somewhat embarrassed rival candidate in the eyes of the English public. Sheppard announced that he was prepared to delay his ordination plans, should the Selectors call upon him to take the side to Australia. Generously, Hutton was quick to say that he would be the first to play under Sheppard and give him every support, so, with Hutton unfit, Sheppard captained the England side against Pakistan at Nottingham. Very soon it became clear that a nucleus of players had built itself around Hutton in the fight for the Ashes and during the tour of the West Indies, Sheppard must have been only too aware of this allegiance to the skipper who had led them through these successes. By the end of the series Hutton was at the helm again and the players, at any rate, were pleased to see him steering affairs in Australia.

In the meantime, he was beginning to have more and more problems with his own fitness. He was more often having to miss the odd match with back trouble and there is no doubt that the captaincy, which I am quite sure he enjoyed, was taking a certain amount of toll. He would not have been human if he had remained unaffected by the extent of the publicity given to the captaincy wrangle. For the first time he began to look less than the master batsman. In style and method he was just the same, but with a distinct falling off in sharpness and concentration, his own particular hallmarks.

Towards the end of August, 1952 I spent a memorable week fielding to him. It all began at Canterbury, when Yorkshire scored 428. There was a fine innings by Billy Sutcliffe, but a truly great hundred by Hutton in the face of a wonderful spell of bowling by Douglas Wright. Hutton scored 120 and was last out. It made a deep impression upon me, and that evening I could remember almost every stroke he played.

At the end of the match, Godfrey Evans, Len Hutton and myself drove in the same car to Scarborough, where I played for M.C.C. against Yorkshire. Without the semblance of a mistake, Hutton cruised to a century in each innings. By this time I was past memorising his good strokes; I just sat back and wondered at the artistry of it all. At the conclusion of that match we embarked upon another, Gentlemen against Players, and he just carried on where he had left off until, on 99, he was stupidly run out and, to my dismay, I was the unfortunate fielder to have to rob him of four hundreds in a row.

You can imagine the respect that I had for him, and my excitement at the prospect of being selected for my first overseas tour under his leadership. I had come to know him, probably, better than some, for he had always taken a great interest in my batting and had gone out of his way to be helpful.

The day we departed from Tilbury the shipping company gave a memorable send-off luncheon on board. My father brought me to the ship and my new captain not only arranged for my father to join us at lunch but he went to a lot of trouble assuring him that he would take the young Cowdrey under his wing. My father was deeply touched, as any father would have been. Three weeks later, just as the ship was preparing to sail into Perth, a cable was handed to me saying that my father had died. No one could have been kinder to me than my captain, who was as good as his word to my father. He did as he had promised and took me firmly, but kindly, under his wing. This meant a great deal to a young aspiring cricketer who, until that date, had never played in a Test match.

Coming to live with him, day by day, I was surprised at his geniality and lively sense of fun, a side of him which never really came across in his public image, and never on the field of play. I was surprised by his ability to make good, witty speeches. He played his cricket very hard; there was no wastage of energy, no shouting, no outward show or gimmicks. There was very little

interference or imposition of discipline. There was none of the extrovert type of personality that one might associate with Brian Sellers. He assumed maximum fitness; he expected the best from everybody, without question. When anyone did not give, it, he tended to lose interest in them and seldom did they get a second chance. It was an adult approach which fitted the modern game. Of course, he did things which met with disapproval, but so does every captain. The fact is that he was charged with the captaincy at a time when a nucleus of good cricketers were beginning to emerge. He took them on, welded them together and led them through one success after another.

That tour of 1954-55 was immensely successful, once we had got the first Test match at Brisbane behind us. Brisbane has often been a bogey ground for England, in my experience, and this occasion saw us at our worst. Hutton did not play in the Queensland match the week before the Test match, but watched with special interest whilst the Queensland fast bowlers extracted a lot of life from the wicket throughout the first day. A plot was hatched. Four fast bowlers were selected and the Australians were asked to bat first when England won the toss. Unfortunately for Hutton, the Test wicket had been more carefully prepared and Australia, revelling in the luxury of being put in to bat first, kept us out in the field for 2½ days. We lost by an innings and plenty.

One down in Australia takes a lot of winning back, but by the time the third Test match had finished at Melbourne we found ourselves one up, after two very close fought Test matches. At Adelaide for the fourth Test match we were left with 95 to win the match and so retain the Ashes – the first time M.C.C. had won a series in Australia since 1932-33. All looked plain sailing on this beautiful wicket, but we under-estimated the ageing Keith Miller. We lost three wickets scoring 20 and the match appeared in the balance once again, but in the end, not without many an anxious moment, Godfrey Evans hit the winning run and Hutton's triumph was complete.

He had not enjoyed much success personally, and the Australians could hardly recognise him as the Hutton of previous tours. Nevertheless, he gave himself unsparingly to every detail of the tour, and by the end looked exhausted. He took his responsibilities very seriously. As he walked out to bat in the last Test in New Zealand most of us realised that this was probably

the end of the road. Physically he might have gone on several years and technically, of course, he was quite good enough, but he had had enough. He had achieved all that he could have wanted and more than he could have dreamed possible.

His family moved from Yorkshire into Surrey, whilst his sons Richard and John were happily involved in the school life of Repton. In the meantime, he was to receive a knighthood for his services to cricket. In retirement he commutes to the City, becoming a journalist during Test matches. Happily he has never lost that engaging twinkle in his eye, nor his devotion to cricket.

EIGHT

Denis Compton

by Michael Melford

NOTHING IS unique, so they say, and that presumably includes no one. But if among batsmen great and indifferent Denis Charles Scott Compton was not unique, it will be a long, long time before any one comparable comes along. Perhaps the strongest evidence of this is that nobody ever says of a modern batsman that he recalls Compton in his execution of a stroke or in mannerisms. The sweep is apt to bring up the name of Compton but that is not because it is played as he played it but because he made the stroke fashionable – perilously so, in the case of some mortals. His range of stroke, his ability to improvise, the complete naturalness with which he played and the reputation for unorthodoxy which was in fact based on a fundamentally correct method – all this would require a genius, another genius, to reproduce.

Nothing reflects better the unusual talent of Denis Compton than his arrival on the first-class scene. In May 1936 he was in the Middlesex second XI and batting number 11. His bowling was required more urgently and he would take a wicket or two with his orthodox left-arm spin. On May 31 he played his first first-class match against Sussex in the Bank Holiday fixture at Lord's still at number 11. Yet before July was out it was being widely debated without any wild flights of fancy whether the selectors had been wise not to consider this young batsman for the coming tour of Australia and New Zealand. In countries where less first-class cricket is played, young men of similar slight experience may occasionally be chosen to tour abroad. But in England, where resources are greater and batting maturity is usually not achieved much before the age of 30, this is barely credible.

Sooner or later we have to come to the figures of Compton's career which ranged in fits and starts, interrupted by war and illness, from 1936 to 1957. Perhaps they are better given at once because, however remarkable some of them may be, they are not all a reflection of what he could have achieved with full fitness or even what he could have done if he had had an appetite for runs and records. In the middle of his career it was hard to escape the feeling that he could have made a hundred almost every time he went in, if he had applied himself. But if the situation was not

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urgent, if, say, Middlesex, with plenty of wickets in hand, were building up a lead quickly on the second evening in order to declare, he would come in, play a few breath-taking strokes and then one too breath-taking even for him to get away with. Somehow, as he came in, you would know that this was not the day. Similarly if it was a case of playing through a last afternoon for a certain draw against irregular bowling, you would not find Compton interested in raising an average. After he had made 100, moreover, he would cast care to the winds. If his luck lasted, he might go on to the 200 which was easily within his powers but it was a matter of no consequence. In Test matches, of course, where 100 is often not nearly enough he would go on with reasonable prudence. But when he made his 278 against Pakistan at Trent Bridge in 1954 in only four hours fifty minutes, he was perfectly prepared to be out at any time from 100 onwards. Sometimes, I think that it is a pity that he did not take a pull at the rein and go on to pass the then Test record of 364. Not because Len Hutton's innings was not a tremendous achievement, immensely valuable, indeed decisive, in the context of the Oval Test of 1938, but because it would have made a mockery of future prolonged attempts to break the record for national prestige and for other reasons which scarcely justify personal record being put above a game of cricket.

So here, in outline, is Denis Compton's record in figures with the reminder that if he had been possessed of a different, more avaricious temperament and a sounder right knee, it would have been even more remarkable:

In all matches, including some ranked as first-class which he played after his retirement in 1957 either for M.C.C. against the Universities, on private tours overseas and once or twice, in 1958, for Middlesex:

Innings 842. Not out 89. Highest score 300 (the famous 300 in three hours at Benoni in 1948). Runs 38,942. Average 51.71. Hundreds 123.

In 78 Test matches he averaged 50.06 and made 17 hundreds.

His 18 hundreds and 3,816 runs in the season of 1947 are, of course, unapproached.

As a bowler, he took 617 wickets at 32.19, including 25 wickets in Test matches.

Yet for all the runs he made and the speed with which he made them, it was something else which captured the imagination of the public, particularly in those post-war, pre-television days when fewer counter-attractions to cricket existed and crowds wanted to watch just such gaiety as Denis Compton provided with marvellous consistency.

His technique was a fascination to the cricketer but not necessarily to the greater public which does not know how difficult a game cricket is. His quick-footedness or quickness into position was astonishing, for after the war he was not naturally light on his feet and was soon to be severely handicapped by his right knee. The stroke which spoke most eloquently of his skill, improvisation and basic straightness, was one which he would play to an off-spinner on a turning pitch. In those days there were no on-side limitations and there would probably be no more than three fielders on the off-side. Compton would step back – with a perfectly timed shuffle, so that the bowler did not see him doing it – and would hit the ball not to the populated on-side but through the gaps existing on the off-side. This he did without risk, for though he was hitting against the spin, he was hitting *straight* against it, not across the line.

This, like other strokes which he played often, the delayed drive past cover-point's left hand, the over-publicised sweep and the superbly timed on-drive, came not from practice and coaching – genius, alas, or perhaps mercifully, cannot be taught – but simply because it was natural for him to play them. Each stroke was the one with which instinctively he met the particular ball. And in that curious way that it has when struck by great players the ball seemed to find some hidden acceleration as it went, to gather pace when it was half-way to the boundary.

In his early days for Middlesex he had the good fortune to play for a season and a half with Patsy Hendren who was then in his late forties but was still a tremendous player, capable of making a hundred in two hours against Surrey in his last championship match. And of being first to 1,000 runs in his penultimate season. The experience, says Compton, was a great education and if you ask him what his most vivid memory of Patsy Hendren's technique was, he will say 'He was a marvellous hooker. He never ducked'.

The general public, however, does not merely comprise

connoisseurs of strokes and their execution. The secret of Denis Compton's hold over the crowds in his heyday – and, sadly, of their disenchantment in his later years – was his capacity for communicating something personal to them, his difficulties, his failures, his triumphs. He was the opposite of the impassive, not because of any conscious effort on his part but because of that elusive gift of personality which makes it fascinating to watch one man, and boring to watch another, doing much the same thing.

While he was in his prime, the crowds suffered and rejoiced with him, given somehow a clearer insight into what was going on between batsman and bowler. His playing of a great bowler such as Doug Wright would become a duel in which both reached the heights and the least percipient members of a large crowd knew it.

In his later years, when a gross misconception of his character grew up from bad publicity and perhaps from wearying of an idol for whom no new praise existed – then his lack of remoteness made him an easy target for the cheap boo. What he did not convey in those later years was the amount of pain and inconvenience which he suffered from his knee. Sometimes in the days when the Compton knee was a national talking-point and he had seemed to limp a little in the field, you might ask one of his colleagues how Denis's knee was. 'Don't know', would be the reply 'he hasn't mentioned it'. In later years he has admitted that it used to give him a great deal of pain towards the end of a long day in the field which the modest range and penetration of Middlesex's bowling made no rarity in those days.

The knee first troubled him in 1947, though he had had a cartilage removed before the war after a collision on the football field with the eminent Charlton goalkeeper, Sam Bartram. Towards the end of 1947 he played what he considers was one of his best innings – the 139 in the last innings of a match against Lancashire at Lord's which Middlesex lost after the championship had been won. This hundred took him level with Hobbs' record of 16 in a season and ahead there seemed to lie only triumphs and broken records. But while he had been bowling earlier in the match he had twisted his right knee, a chip of bone had become detached and the long years of handicap had begun. In the last match of that season, during his 246 for the Champion County against the

Rest at The Oval, he actually had to retire but returned after the week-end to bat as well as ever. It was in that innings that he lost his balance and while on the ground played a famous stroke to long-leg for four.

Until 1950 the knee was frequently under treatment but was sound enough for him to play for Arsenal for much of the winter of 1949–50 and to score a goal in the Cup Final of 1950 which they won. But that was the end of his football. Soon afterwards he had to have an operation and it was not until the beginning of August that he played cricket, resuming, characteristically, with a hundred against Surrey at The Oval. The small fragment of bone was removed but the arthritic condition of the knee was not relieved and it went on giving trouble until in November 1955 he went into University College Hospital for the kneecan to be removed. Again he returned with a hundred – against Somerset at Glastonbury in the following July – and he played in his last Test match at The Oval in August. His 94 against Australia was such that Peter May, then approaching the height of his own brilliance, was able to take a secondary part in their stand.

This last operation was a success, though it could not of course, increase his mobility which in any case was declining as he approached 40. It was the knowledge that the knee was now not permanently unsound that persuaded him to take a runner when it temporarily caused discomfort during an innings against Northants at Lord's in May 1957. During the previous decade, for all his periods of acute discomfort, he had only once accepted the offer of a runner, so this was a historic moment. It was also an uproarious one. Never the most judicious runner between wickets – his notorious eccentricity in this field had as its highlight the running-out of his brother, Leslie, on the occasion of the latter's benefit match – he now took an active part in the calling from square-leg and a turbulent *ménage à trois* developed which few who were present are likely to have forgotten.

For many years, during some of which he had shared the Middlesex captaincy with Bill Edrich, he had fielded largely at slip where he was a lively conversationalist and was more likely to catch the difficult ones than the straightforward. Though it was his bowling in which Middlesex were probably first interested, its full potential was never quite realised. He could probably have become a good orthodox left-arm spinner and against South Africa

at Lord's in 1951 was used as one, though by then he had adopted the chinaman and googly and found the return to the conventional rather difficult. He had picked up the chinaman and googly, as a result of playing with and against that most prodigious spinner, Jack Walsh of Leicestershire, and from about 1947 his impatient temperament found more to satisfy it in this form of bowling. But it meant that he was used mostly for the breaking of partnerships and he was often short of practice. He was not the most fanatical supporter of net practice either as a batsman or bowler and indeed was only known to take part willingly in one form of practice – slip-catching. Thus he was seldom able to sustain the control which is desperately difficult for the most hard-working left-arm wrist spinner to achieve, the more so when he spins the ball as much as a Walsh or a Compton. His length was apt to wander but he was capable of bowling very well indeed, for there were few pitches on which he did not turn the ball a lot and his googly was well disguised. Bowling off a couple of strides as he did, it is possible too that he sometimes broke through before the batsman had time to envelop himself in a shroud of concentration.

I have always thought his best performance as a bowler was for Middlesex against Surrey at Lord's in 1949 in a match which Middlesex badly needed to win. If they won, they would probably win the championship. Surrey, a strong batting side then, won the toss on a very good pitch and made over 100 before the first wicket fell. Compton then began a long spell from the Pavilion end, in which he seemed to be playing Surrey by himself, fielding magnificently to his own bowling and driving batsmen into errors and indecision where previously there had been only confidence. He took five wickets that day in 30 overs and held two catches but ended the day with a mishap which was typical of those which were interspersed among his successes. Coming in to bat in the last few minutes, when no one could have cavilled at the employment of a nightwatchman, he played on to Eric Bedser without scoring. Generally he refused a nightwatchman, preferring to be in at the start next morning.

In spite of this and other mishaps, Middlesex built a winning position by the second evening. That night there was a thunderstorm and next day Alec Bedser bowled them out for 94. It required one of Denis Compton's most skilful innings against Derby-

shire in the last match of the season to earn a half-share in the championship with Yorkshire.

For some reason, more is known and desired to be known about cricketers' characters and temperaments than about heroes in other sporting fields. A jockey can ride for 30 years, his name a household word, but the general public knows little more about him than that he can go to scale at 8st 3 and – the height of intimacy this – has just one large meal a day, usually a steak in the evening. On the other hand, all the world knows that such and such a cricketer is allegedly too nice or too capricious to be considered for the captaincy, drinks champagne for breakfast, lacks the temperament for the big occasion and so on. If I had my way, cricketers, politicians and especially actors would be seen doing their particular jobs and would keep their private lives unexplored on the other side of ropes, despatch box or footlights as the case may be. The last thing I want to know about a chap who has just given a masterly interpretation of Hamlet is that he has a wife and five children in Mill Hill or is 'friendly' with an untidy-looking blonde and prefers anti-apartheid demonstrations to marriage. I am, of course, an old square but I consider this ample justification for limiting further profound observations on Denis Compton's character and off-field career, irreproachable and monastic though they may be, to the facts that he has a considerable sense of humour, is excellent company, has been known to be unpunctual but has a marvellous capacity for allaying with charm any wrath caused by the last idiosyncrasy.

He was born on May 23rd, 1918, at Hendon. In the light of future events, wrote J. J. Warr in *The World of Cricket*, he should have been borne down from Valhalla on a silver cloud. However, it was Hendon which was blessed, at the northern terminus of the number 13 bus which passes Lord's, and he went to Bell Lane School of whose Old Boy team his father was captain and wicket-keeper.

From early excursions as scorer with his father he moved on to a match at Lord's for the Elementary Schools under 15 against Mr C. F. Tufnell's XI, in which he made 114 and opened the innings with Arthur McIntyre. There followed some years on the Lord's ground staff, a short and unremarkable record in the Minor Counties competition with the Middlesex second XI and then that first match against Sussex in which he made 14. In June he made

87 at Lord's against Northants in his third match and a week later his first first-class hundred, the first of the 123, at Northampton where, through the years, he was to average 107. That first hundred was no hard struggle by a promising boy to master bowling better than any to which he had been accustomed hitherto. It occupied only 105 minutes and was the first of many innings which were utterly different from those of the ordinarily talented young batsman.

The outline of his subsequent record is well known: the first Test against New Zealand at The Oval in 1937, the 100 in his first Test against Australia at Trent Bridge in 1938, the war years in India where he played 17 first-class innings at an average of 87.06, the golden post-war era and the troubled years after that when he could still play magnificently but not perhaps quite so often and rarely without pain or discomfort. What, I think, need recording are not necessarily the mightier feats on paper, but some of those which no one else could have performed in quite the same memorable way.

Who, for example, at the age of 20 could have played as he did on the second evening of a match against Worcestershire at Lord's in 1939? Middlesex needed runs quickly in order to declare overnight and the young Compton was sent in with instructions to hurry. He went in at ten minutes to six and at half-past-six was 83 not out.

In the early post-war days of June 1946 the famous bad patch occurred. It did not last long – inside a month and was interrupted in the middle by an innings of 202 at Cambridge – but it contained some pretty spectacular noughts and these inevitably caught the public's fancy. In spite of the wealth of runs in India and a good start to the season culminating in a hundred in each innings against Lancashire there could as yet be no certainty that he had retained all his gifts, that the brilliant boy of 1939 would have come to his full powers as he reached the prime of a batsman's life.

After the two hundreds at Old Trafford, in a match which Middlesex nevertheless lost, he made 10 and 0 not out against Nottinghamshire and, 7 and 1 against Derbyshire. He then paid his profitable visit to Cambridge. However, returning to Lord's for the Whitsun match, he began to do the thing in style. 0 against Sussex, 0 in the Test trial at Lord's, 8 and 0 against Yorkshire, 1 against Glamorgan at Swansea and 0 again, bowled first ball by

Amarnath, in the Lord's Test against India. He could have been thoroughly out of form and have pottered his way to 30 odd in an orgy of mistimings and only those who watched might have talked of 'bad patches'. But all these noughts on important occasions meant that the matter assumed much more than local prominence.

I was standing by the Tavern when he came in to play his next innings at Lord's immediately after the Test match. It was against Warwickshire and the pitch was well over towards the Tavern side of the square. I thus retain a very clear picture of his first ball from Eric Hollies which he played back on to the stumps without removing a bail. In the next three hours 20 minutes he made 122, and he was away again. By the end of the season he had made nearly 2,500 runs and averaged 61.

A full examination of the feats of the glorious summer of 1947 would fill a volume. Compton began it quietly and for a long time Bill Edrich was more prolific, especially during a period of five weeks in June and July when he made 1,365 runs. Both he and Compton made five hundreds in this period but Compton made only a mere 843 runs. When Bill Edrich came to the wicket that summer, one had the feeling that he was so tremendously in form that he was just carrying on where he had left off in the innings before. Compton looked a little more humanly vulnerable early, but once he was in, it was unthinkable that any one but himself could get him out. In August Edrich suffered a slight injury which prevented him from bowling and withdrew from the last Test, but he was able to play in the vital championship match against Gloucestershire at Cheltenham which almost assured Middlesex of the championship. Compton made 53 and 113 in the Test match, bringing his tally in the series up to 753, and for the rest of the season he scarcely ever failed, though as new records were exposed before him, the pressure on him must have been considerable. Against Surrey at Lord's 178 and 19 not out, against Northants 60 and 85, against Lancashire 17 and 139. At Hastings on September 4th, he made 101 against the South Africans amid tremendous excitement, for this 17th hundred of the season took him past Hobbs' 16 of 1925. The game was held up for five minutes and *Wisden* records that 'his county colleagues, Robins and Edrich went on the field to join in the congratulations'. The 246 at The Oval when Middlesex, the Champion County, beat

the Rest by nine wickets finished off a season which was a sunny fairy tale of success.

It was early in the following season, on a Wednesday at Lords, that the partnership of Compton and Edrich achieved perhaps its most extraordinary feat, one which is in the record books but passed relatively unsung because not many people were present. The pitch was at the top side of the square close to the Grand Stand and the match against Somerset began without incident. At lunch Middlesex were 101 for two, Edrich and Compton both having just come in. At tea, they were still there and each had just passed 100 which also in the context of those days was nothing very remarkable, well though they had played.

After tea for just 70 minutes there took place one of the most extraordinary onslaughts on any type of bowling which can ever have been inflicted at Lord's. In that short period 209 runs were scored, 139 of them by Compton who, playing on the off-side at one end and on the on-side at the other, struck the ball relentlessly to the near boundary, often with such force that it rebounded halfway to the pitch. He hit only three sixes but 37 fours.

This perhaps is a prime example of how the conditions in which cricket is played can affect figures. In this case the railings, which were only erected round the north side of the ground in the middle 1930s, ensured a high over-rate. How many fewer runs would have been scored if the ball had had to be recovered from under empty seats and spectators' feet? Eric Hill, who was playing for Somerset on that occasion, recalls the subtle efforts made by the bowlers to avoid catching the captain's eye and being selected as the next victim.

This 252 not out was Compton's highest to date – to be exceeded later that year by the 300 at Benoni. The stand of 424, made in under four hours, was ended when George Mann declared in order to have plenty of time to bowl at Somerset that evening. It had beaten all previous records for the third wicket except two and, given a few more minutes, must have exceeded the 445 of two New Zealanders which still stands as the highest.

This was one type of great innings which Denis Compton played. Another, utterly different, followed next year when Middlesex had to beat Derbyshire at Lord's in their last match of the season to be sure of a half-share or better in the championship. The match was played on quite a fast lifting pitch which did not im-

prove with time and which must have been the answer to Derbyshire's prayers, for Copson, Gladwin and Jackson were a very nasty proposition on it. By the standards of those days when Middlesex were seldom short of runs and had as their main concern the problem of getting the opposition out, the first two days caused no great concern. But twice Alan Revill established himself, making 73 not out and 62, and though the youthful J. J. Warr, in only his second year at Cambridge, took five for 36 in the second innings, Middlesex had to make 193 to win.

On this pitch this was at best a distant target—they had mustered only 139 in the first innings—and when they were 36 for five, it seemed out of sight. But the captain R. W. V. Robins, made 50 superbly in an hour, Leslie Compton and Jim Sims stood firm later and at the other end Denis Compton, needing all his skill, took Middlesex steadily nearer, batting for three hours forty minutes in all. When they won by three wickets, he was 97 not out, having played one of the really great bad wicket innings.

The fact that the runs of Compton and Edrich were made on so many different grounds—during Edrich's purple patch of June–July 1947 he played only once for Middlesex at Lord's—must indicate a much higher standard of pitches generally than exists in the 1960s. (Why? One would have expected the art of groundsmanship to have suffered during the war). But this innings against Derbyshire and the 76 not out against Australia in the Lord's Test match of 1938 were two which established his huge ability on bad pitches as well as good.

Yet within a few years such extravagantly unfair comments were being made about him as 'When will he learn to play on bad wickets?'. Those years of the early 1950s were well stocked with successes by most standards, though generally the luck was against him and the successes, inevitably were less spectacular. I remember one astonishing innings at The Oval, on a turning, lifting pitch against Laker and Lock at the height of their triumphs, when he made 62 in 40 minutes. But there were many other days when things were not so easy such as when Middlesex played Surrey at Lord's in 1952 during a Test match for which he had asked not to be considered because he was so out of form. He had not been in long but was playing quite promisingly when he swept a ball from Loader with the middle of the bat. It was never more than an inch or two from the ground and travelling very fast but it

struck the foot of Eric Bedser, who as a deepish short-leg was taking evasive action, leapt high in the air straight to the wicket-keeper standing back some 15 yards away. Overall, it was not a lucky time.

During the last years of Denis Compton's first-class career he was still wanted for England, a more successful England then than when he had been in his more prolific heyday – but he was now mostly seen in a supporting part while the younger May and Cowdrey bore the main brunt. The last of his five hundreds against Australia was made in 1948, that famous 145 not out at Old Trafford, achieved after he had been struck on the head early on when mishooking a bumper from Lindwall. Led off the field, he had the wound stitched and resumed later in the day at 119 for five to take England to a score which enabled her to give her best performance of the series. The other hundreds were memorable in other, less painful ways: the pre-war 102 in his first Australian Test at Trent Bridge, the centuries in each innings at Adelaide in 1946–47, the 184 which almost saved the First Test of 1948 at Trent Bridge. This last innings he puts very high among his best, for it was played against Miller and Lindwall at their most menacing and was repeatedly interrupted by rain and bad light. 'Rarely can a Test match have been played under such conditions' said *Wisden*. For nearly seven hours he fought on and England, from what seemed a hopeless position, were almost in sight of safety when he was out in a miserable way. Changing his mind about hooking a fast bumper from Miller, he slipped and fell on his wicket.

Though he never made another hundred against Australia after 1948, he played some fine innings in the 1953 series, when his was the winning hit which recovered The Ashes, and again in 1954–55; and he was only six runs short of a hundred without knee-cap in his last Test against Australia at The Oval in 1956.

Meanwhile, he had made hundreds against South Africa in 1951 and 1955, against West Indies at Port of Spain in 1954, two against New Zealand in 1949 and the astonishing 278 against Pakistan in 1954. His 158 at Old Trafford in the wonderful South African Test of 1955 was an innings of his old time brilliance, and few reasoning judges ever doubted that but for his infirmity he could still have readjusted the record books when he put his mind to it.

If you ask him nowadays how much he enjoyed his cricket, he will say 'Loved every second of it'. Yet there must have been occasional days in the second half of his career which were very hard work, not entirely because of the handicap imposed on him by his knee. There were days, liable to fool all but those who knew him well, when he played like a poor shadow of his old self. The moon, it might be said, was in the wrong quarter; and for some reason he fumbled, mistimed, hesitated, played and missed. On these occasions he usually got out before mournful reflections on the melancholy decline of a once great player took too much of a hold on those who did not know. But there was one Sunday at the end of his last season when he and I both played for Gerald Crutchley's XI in the annual Colin McIver Memorial match at Ashted in Surrey.

As soon as he went in, it was clear that it was one of those days when it was a pretty baffling game for him. He advanced down the pitch to a young off-spinner and missed easily. The wicket-keeper, with commendable presence of mind, merely threw the ball back to the bowler. He pushed forward and edged the ball into the hands of gully who fairly hurled it on the ground as if it were too hot to hold. Realising that this was an occasion when every one wanted him to make a few runs, he struggled on for longer than he would have done in a first-class match at that time and made something like 40 in an hour and a quarter, which put us behind the clock.

He was only 39 but on that Sunday in August 1957 anyone would have been justified in waxing eloquent and sentimental about the pitiful sight of a giant who had lost his strength, a great artist who had lost his genius.

Three days later against Worcestershire he played his last match as a professional for Middlesex, made 143 in the first innings, 48 in the second and batted as well as ever. No one who knew him could have expected anything else.

Statistics

by Michael Fordham

DR WILLIAM GILBERT GRACE
b 18.7.1848 *d* 23.10.1915
 Gloucestershire, England and London County

CAREER IN FIRST-CLASS CRICKET

	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	'100's
1865	8	1	189	48	27.00	—
1866	13	2	581	224*	52.81	2
1867	6	1	154	75	30.80	—
1868	13	2	625	134*	56.81	3
1869	24	1	1,320	180	57.39	6
1870	38	5	1,808	215	54.73*	5
1871	39	4	2,739	268	78.25	10
1872	29	3	1,485	170*	57.11	6
1873	32	7	1,805	192*	72.20	6
1874	32	0	1,664	179	52.00	8
1875	48	2	1,498	152	32.56	3
1876	46	4	2,622	344	62.42	7
1877	40	3	1,474	261	39.83	2
1878	40	2	1,116	116	29.36	1
1879	26	2	814	123	33.91	2
1880	27	3	951	152	39.62	2
1881	22	1	792	182	37.71	2
1882	36	0	974	88	27.05	—
1883	37	2	1,136	112	32.45	1
1884	45	5	1,361	116*	34.02	3
1885	39	3	1,614	221*	44.83	4
1886	55	3	1,846	170	35.50	4
1887	46	8	2,062	183*	54.26	6
1888	59	1	1,886	215	32.51	4
1889	45	2	1,396	154	32.46	3
1890	55	3	1,476	109*	28.38	1
1891	40	1	771	72*	19.76	—

* Denotes NOT OUT

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	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's.
1891-92	11	1	448	159*	44.80	1
1892	37	3	1,055	99	31.02	—
1893	50	5	1,609	128	35.75	1
1894	45	1	1,293	196	29.38	3
1895	48	2	2,346	288	51.00	9
1896	54	4	2,135	301	42.70	4
1897	41	2	1,532	131	39.28	4
1898	41	5	1,513	168	42.02	3
1899	23	1	515	78	23.40	—
1900	31	1	1,277	126	42.56	3
1901	32	1	1,007	132	32.48	1
1902	35	3	1,187	131	37.09	2
1903	27	1	593	150	22.80	1
1904	26	1	637	166	25.48	1
1905	13	0	250	71	19.23	—
1906	10	1	241	74	26.77	—
1907	2	0	19	16	9.50	—
1908	2	0	40	25	20.00	—
	1,468	103	53,856	344	39.45	124

N.B. The above figures are based on those compiled by the late Roy Webber some years ago. The totals differ from those which have always been given in Wisden as Webber deleted certain matches which he did not regard as first-class.

CAREER IN TEST CRICKET

M	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's	50's
22	36	2	1,098	170	32.29	2	5

HIGHEST SCORE: 344 M.C.C. v. Kent (Canterbury) 1876.

HIGHEST SCORE IN TEST CRICKET: 170 England v. Australia (Oval) 1886.

* Denotes NOT OUT

VICTOR THOMAS TRUMPER

b 2.11.1877 d 28.6.1915

New South Wales and Australia

CAREER IN FIRST-CLASS CRICKET

	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's
1894-95	4	1	22	11	7.33	-
1895-96		DID NOT PLAY				
1896-97		DID NOT PLAY				
1897-98	10	0	192	68	19.20	-
1898-99	15	1	873	292*	62.35	2
1899	48	3	1,556	300*	34.57	3
1899-1900	10	0	721	208	72.10	2
1900-01	7	0	458	230	65.42	1
1901-02	18	0	486	73	27.00	-
1902	53	0	2,570	128	48.49	11
1902-03 (S. Af.)	8	1	307	70	43.85	-
1902-03 (Aust.)	9	0	446	178	49.55	2
1903-04	21	3	990	185*	55.00	2
1904-05 (Aust.)	4	0	198	81	49.50	-
1904-05 (N.Z.)	5	1	436	172	109.00	1
1905	47	1	1,667	110	36.23	2
1905-06	6	0	250	101	41.66	1
1906-07	3	0	23	11	7.66	-
1907-08	19	0	797	166	41.94	3
1908-09	1	0	0	0	0.00	-
1909	45	2	1,435	150	33.37	3
1909-10	1	0	105	105	105.00	1
1910-11	20	2	1,246	214*	69.22	3
1911-12	20	3	583	113	34.29	1
1912-13	13	3	843	201*	84.30	3
1913-14 (Aust.)	5	0	107	32	21.40	-
1913-14 (N.Z.)	9	0	628	252	69.77	1
	401	21	16,939	300*	44.57	42

* Denotes NOT OUT

180 *Cricket: The Great Ones*

N.B. The figures on p. 179 differ from those given in Wisden for 1916 in so far as his innings of 211 against Southland in New Zealand in 1913-14 is omitted as it is not regarded as first-class.

CAREER IN TEST CRICKET

M	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's	50's
48	89	8	3,164	214*	39.06	8	13

HIGHEST SCORE: 300* Australians v. Sussex (Hove) 1899

HIGHEST SCORE IN TEST CRICKET: 214* Australia v. South Africa (Adelaide) 1910-11.

SIR JOHN BERRY HOBBS

b 16.12.1882 *d* 21.12.1963

(Cambridgeshire), Surrey and England

CAREER IN FIRST-CLASS CRICKET

	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's
1905	54	3	1,317	155	25.82	2
1906	53	6	1,913	162*	40.70	4
1907	63	6	2,135	166*	37.45	4
1907-08	22	1	876	115	41.71	2
1908	53	2	1,904	116	37.33	6
1909	54	2	2,114	205	40.65	6
1909-10	20	1	1,194	187	62.84	3
1910	63	3	1,982	133	33.03	3
1911	60	3	2,376	154*	41.68	4
1911-12	18	1	943	187	55.47	3
1912	60	6	2,042	111	37.81	3
1913	57	5	2,605	184	50.09	9
1913-14	22	2	1,489	170	74.45	5
1914	48	2	2,697	226	58.67	11
1919	49	6	2,594	205*	60.32	8
1920	50	2	2,827	215*	58.89	11
1920-21	19	1	924	131	51.33	4

* Denotes NOT OUT

	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's
1921	6	2	312	172*	78.00	1
1922	46	5	2,552	168	62.24	10
1923	59	4	2,087	136	37.94	5
1924	43	7	2,094	211	58.16	6
1924-25	17	1	865	154	54.06	3
1925	48	5	3,024	266*	70.32	16
1926	41	3	2,949	316*	77.60	10
1927	32	1	1,641	150	52.93	7
1928	38	7	2,542	200*	82.00	12
1928-29	18	1	962	142	56.58	2
1929	39	5	2,263	204	66.55.	10
1930	43	2	2,103	146*	51.29	5
1931	49	6	2,418	153	56.23	10
1932	35	4	1,764	161*	56.90	5
1933	18	0	1,105	221	61.38	6
1934	18	1	624	116	36.70	1
	1,315	106	61,237	316*	50.65	197

CAREER IN TEST CRICKET

M	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's	50's
61	102	7	5,410	211	56.94	15	28

HIGHEST SCORE: 316 Surrey v. Middlesex (Lord's) 1926

HIGHEST SCORE IN TEST CRICKET: 211 England v. South Africa (Lord's) 1924.

* Denotes NOT OUT

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WALTER REGINALD HAMMOND
b 19.6.1903 d 2.7.1965
Gloucestershire and England
CAREER IN FIRST-CLASS CRICKET

	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's
1920,	4	1	27	18	9.00	—
1921	3	0	2	1	0.66	—
1922	9	0	88	32	9.77	—
1923	55	4	1,421	110	27.86	1
1924	45	4	1,239	174*	30.21	2
1925	58	5	1,818	250*	34.30	3
1925–26,	18	3	732	238*	48.80	2
1926		DID NOT PLAY				
1927	47	4	2,969	197	69.04	12
1927–28	21	2	908	166*	47.78	2
1928	48	5	2,825	244	65.69	9
1928–29	18	1	1,553	251	91.35	7
1929	47	9	2,456	238*	64.63	10
1930	44	6	2,032	211*	53.47	5
1930–31	19	2	1,045	136*	61.47	3
1931	49	7	1,781	168*	42.40	6
1932 *	49	4	2,528	264	56.17	8
1932–33	20	2	1,511	336*	83.94	5
1933	54	5	3,323	264	67.81	13
1934	35	4	2,366	302*	76.32	8
1934–35	17	3	789	281*	56.35	3
1935	58	5	2,616	252	49.35	7
1936	42	5	2,107	317	56.94	5
1936–37	23	2	1,242	231*	59.14	5
1937	55	5	3,252	217	65.04	13
1938	42	2	3,011	271	75.27	15
1938–39	18	1	1,025	181	60.29	4
1939	46	7	2,479	302	63.56	7

* Denotes NOT OUT

	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's
1942-43	2	0	78	60	39.00	-
1945	10	0	592	121	59.20	3
1946	26	5	1,783	214	84.90	7
1946-47	19	0	781	208	41.10	2
1950	2	1	107	92*	107.00	-
1951	1	0	7	7	7.00	-
	1,004	104	50,493	336*	56.10	167

CAREER IN TEST CRICKET

M	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's	50's
85	140	16	7,249	336*	58.45	22	24

HIGHEST SCORE: 336* England v. New Zealand (Auckland) 1932-33.

SIR DONALD GEORGE BRADMAN

b 27.8.1908

New South Wales, South Australia and Australia

CAREER IN FIRST-CLASS CRICKET

	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's
1927-28	10	1	416	134*	46.22	2
1928-29	24	6	1,690	340*	93.88	7
1929-30	16	2	1,586	452*	113.23	5
1930	36	6	2,960	334	98.66	10
1930-31	18	0	1,422	258	79.00	5
1931-32	13	1	1,403	299*	116.91	7
1932-33	21	2	1,171	238	61.63	3
1933-34	11	2	1,192	253	132.44	5
1934	27	3	2,020	304	84.16	7
1934-35		DID NOT PLAY				
1935-36	9	0	1,173	369	130.33	4

* Denotes NOT OUT

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	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's
1936-37	19	1	1,552	270	86.22	6
1937-38	18	2	1,437	246	89.81	7
1938	26	5	2,429	278	115.66	13
1938-39	7	1	919	225	153.16	6
1939-40	15	3	1,475	267	122.91	5
1940-41	4	0	18	12	4.50	-
1941-42		DID NOT PLAY				
1945-46	3	1	232	112	116.00	1
1946-47	14	1	1,032	234	79.38	4
1947-48	12	2	1,296	201	129.60	8
1948	31	4	2,428	187	89.92	11
1948-49	4	0	216	123	54.00	1
	338	43	28,067	452*	95.14	117

CAREER IN TEST CRICKET

M	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's	50's
52	80	10	6,996	334	99.94	29	13

HIGHEST SCORE: 452* New South Wales v. Queensland (Sydney) 1929-30.

HIGHEST SCORE IN TEST CRICKET: 334 Australia v. England (Leeds) 1930.

GEORGE ALPHONSO HEADLEY, M.B.E.

b 30.5.1909

Jamaica and West Indies

CAREER IN FIRST-CLASS CRICKET

	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's
1927-28	5	0	409	211	81.80	1
1928-29	6	0	326	143	54.33	1
1929-30	11	0	891	223	81.00	4

* Denotes NOT OUT

	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's
1930-31 (Aust.)	25	1	1,066	131	44.41	4
1931-32	4	2	723	344*	361.50	3
1932-33	2	0	51	30	25.50	-
1933	38	3	2,320	224*	66.28	7
1934-35	9	1	637	270*	79.62	2
1935	2	0	152	134	76.00	1
1935-36	5	0	266	118	53.20	1
1938-39	2	0	263	160	131.50	2
1939	30	6	1,745	234*	72.70	6
1946 (Jam.)	4	1	170	99	56.66	-
1946-47	3	3	339	203*	—	1
1947-48	6	3	177	65	59.30	-
1948-49 (Ind.)	4	1	68	57*	22.66	-
1951	1	0	20	20	20.00	-
1952	2	0	159	98	79.50	-
1953-54	4	1	75	53*	25.00	-
1954	1	0	64	64	64.00	-
	164	22	9,921	344*	69.86	33

CAREER IN TEST CRICKET

M	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's	50's
22	40.	4	2,190	270*	60.83	10	

HIGHEST SCORE: 344* Jamaica v. Lord Tennyson's XI (Kingston) 1931-32.

HIGHEST SCORE IN TEST CRICKET: 270* West Indies v. England (Kingston) 1934-35.

* Denotes NOT OUT

SIR LEONARD HUTTON

b 23.6.1916

Yorkshire and England

CAREER IN FIRST-CLASS CRICKET

	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's
1934	28	2	863	196	33.19	1
1935	23	3	577	131	28.85	1
1935-36	5	2	123	59	41.00	—
1936	49	6	1,282	163	29.81	1
1937	58	7	2,888	271*	56.62	10
1938	37	6	1,874	364	60.45	6
1938-39	19	1	1,168	202	64.88	5
1939	52	6	2,883	280*	62.67	12
1945	16	0	782	188	48.87	2
1946	38	6	1,552	183*	48.50	4
1946-47	21	3	1,267	151*	70.38	3
1947	44	4	2,585	270*	64.62	11
1947-48	10	1	578	138	64.22	2
1948	48	7	2,654	176*	64.73	10
1948-49	21	1	1,477	174	73.85	5
1949	56	6	3,429	269*	68.58	12
1950	40	3	2,128	202*	57.51	6
1950-51	25	4	1,382	156*	65.80	5
1951	47	8	2,145	194*	55.00	7
1952	45	3	2,567	189	61.11	11
1953	44	5	2,458	241	63.02	8
1953-54	12	2	780	205	78.00	2
1954	28	2	912	163	35.07	2
1954-55	25	2	1,059	145*	46.04	2
1955	19	1	537	194	29.83	1
1957	2	0	101	76	50.50	—
1960	2	0	89	89	44.50	—
	814	91	40,140	364	55.51	129

* Denotes NOT OUT

CAREER IN TEST CRICKET

M	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's	50's
79	138	15	• 6,971	364	56.67	19	33

HIGHEST SCORE: 364 England v. Australia (Oval) 1938.

DENIS CHARLES SCOTT COMPTON, C.B.E.

b 23.5.1918

Middlesex and England

CAREER IN FIRST-CLASS CRICKET

	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's
1936	32	3	1,004	100*	34.62	1
1937	46	4	1,980	177	47.14	3
1938	47	6	1,868	180*	45.56	5
1939	50	6	2,468	214*	56.09	8
1944-45	13	2	990	249*	90.00	5
1945-46	4	0	316	124	79.00	2
1946	45	6	2,403	235	61.61	10
1946-47	31	4	1,660	163	61.48	5
1947	50	8	3,816	246	90.85	18
1948	47	7	2,451	252*	61.27	9
1948-49	26	5	1,781	300	84.80	8
1949	56	4	2,530	182	48.65	9
1950	23	2	957	144	45.57	2
1950-51	26	5	1,095	142	52.14	4
1951	40	6	2,193	172	64.50	8
1952	54	6	1,880	132	39.16	4
1953	47	5	1,659	143*	39.50	4
1953-54	14	1	630	133	48.46	1
1954	28	2	1,524	278	58.62	4
1954-55	16	2	799	132	57.07	3
1955	36	1	1,209	158	34.54	2

* Denotes NOT OUT

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	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's
1956	21	1	705	110	35.25	2
1956-57	22	1	792	131	37.71	2
1957	45	0	1,554	143	34.53	3
1958	6	0	104	31	17.33	-
1959	2	0	107	71	53.50	-
1959-60	4	1	160	74*	53.33	-
1963	2	0	88	87	44.00	-
1963-64	4	0	146	103	36.50	1
1964	2	0	73	59	36.50	-
	839	88	38,942	300	51.85	123

CAREER IN TEST CRICKET

M	I.	N.O.	RUNS	H.S.	AVGE.	100's	50's
78	131	15	5,807	278	50.06	17	28

HIGHEST SCORE: 300 M.C.C. v. N.E. Transvaal (Benoni) 1948-49.

HIGHEST SCORE IN TEST CRICKET: 278 England v. Pakistan (Nottingham) 1954.

* Denotes NOT OUT

struck the foot of Eric Bedser, who as a deepish short-leg was taking evasive action, leapt high in the air straight to the wicket-keeper standing back some 15 yards away. Overall, it was not a lucky time.

During the last years of Denis Compton's first-class career he was still wanted for England, a more successful England then than when he had been in his more prolific heyday – but he was now mostly seen in a supporting part while the younger May and Cowdrey bore the main brunt. The last of his five hundreds against Australia was made in 1948, that famous 145 not out at Old Trafford, achieved after he had been struck on the head early on when mishooking a bumper from Lindwall. Led off the field, he had the wound stitched and resumed later in the day at 119 for five to take England to a score which enabled her to give her best performance of the series. The other hundreds were memorable in other, less painful ways: the pre-war 102 in his first Australian Test at Trent Bridge, the centuries in each innings at Adelaide in 1946–47, the 184 which almost saved the First Test of 1948 at Trent Bridge. This last innings he puts very high among his best, for it was played against Miller and Lindwall at their most menacing and was repeatedly interrupted by rain and bad light. 'Rarely can a Test match have been played under such conditions' said *Wisden*. For nearly seven hours he fought on and England, from what seemed a hopeless position, were almost in sight of safety when he was out in a miserable way. Changing his mind about hooking a fast bumper from Miller, he slipped and fell on his wicket.

Though he never made another hundred against Australia after 1948, he played some fine innings in the 1953 series, when his was the winning hit which recovered The Ashes, and again in 1954–55; and he was only six runs short of a hundred without knee-cap in his last Test against Australia at The Oval in 1956.

Meanwhile, he had made hundreds against South Africa in 1951 and 1955, against West Indies at Port of Spain in 1954, two against New Zealand in 1949 and the astonishing 278 against Pakistan in 1954. His 158 at Old Trafford in the wonderful South African Test of 1955 was an innings of his old time brilliance, and few reasoning judges ever doubted that but for his infirmity he could still have readjusted the record books when he put his mind to it.

If you ask him nowadays how much he enjoyed his cricket, he will say 'Loved every second of it'. Yet there must have been occasional days in the second half of his career which were very hard work, not entirely because of the handicap imposed on him by his knee. There were days, liable to fool all but those who knew him well, when he played like a poor shadow of his old self. The moon, it might be said, was in the wrong quarter; and for some reason he fumbled, mistimed, hesitated, played and missed. On these occasions he usually got out before mournful reflections on the melancholy decline of a once great player took too much of a hold on those who did not know. But there was one Sunday at the end of his last season when he and I both played for Gerald Crutchley's XI in the annual Colin McIver Memorial match at Ashted in Surrey.

As soon as he went in, it was clear that it was one of those days when it was a pretty baffling game for him. He advanced down the pitch to a young off-spinner and missed easily. The wicket-keeper, with commendable presence of mind, merely threw the ball back to the bowler. He pushed forward and edged the ball into the hands of gully who fairly hurled it on the ground as if it were too hot to hold. Realising that this was an occasion when every one wanted him to make a few runs, he struggled on for longer than he would have done in a first-class match at that time and made something like 40 in an hour and a quarter, which put us behind the clock.

He was only 39 but on that Sunday in August 1957 anyone would have been justified in waxing eloquent and sentimental about the pitiful sight of a giant who had lost his strength, a great artist who had lost his genius.

Three days later against Worcestershire he played his last match as a professional for Middlesex, made 143 in the first innings, 48 in the second and batted as well as ever. No one who knew him could have expected anything else.

Statistics

by Michael Fordham